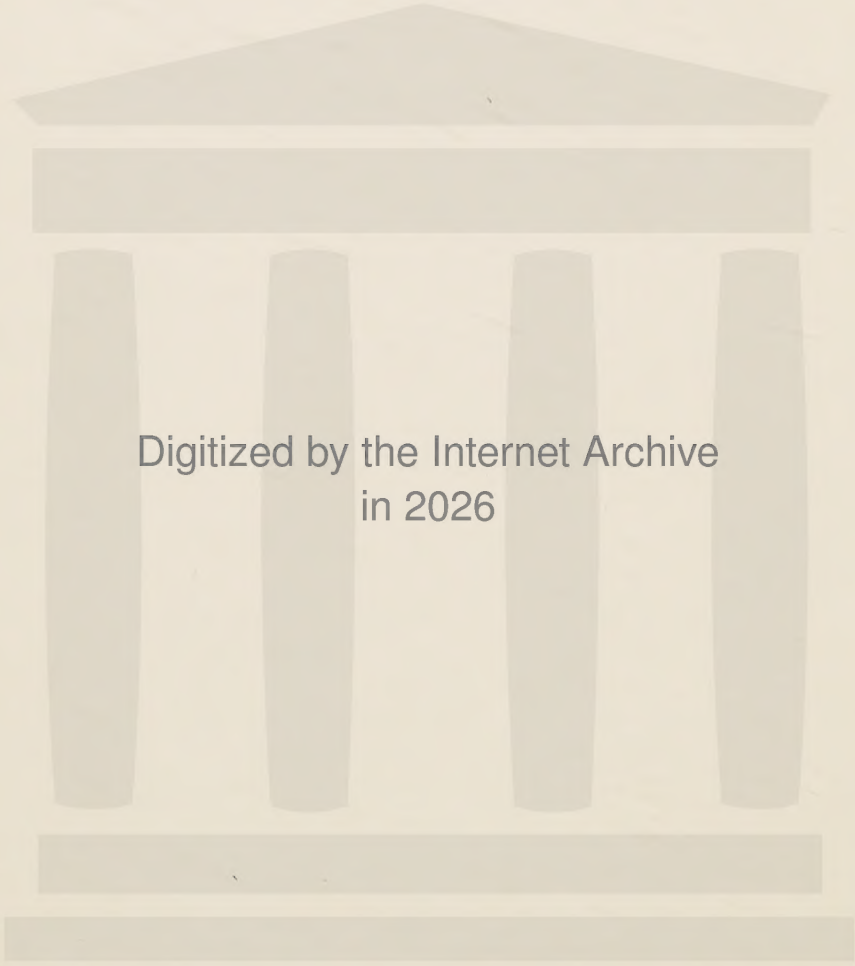
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TENDENCIES IN RENAISSANCE LITERARY THEORY

BY

BASIL WILLEY, B.A.

HUGO DE BALSHAM STUDENT AND LATE SCHOLAR OF PETERHOUSE

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This Essay was awarded the Le Bas Prize in the University of Cambridge for the year 1921—22

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PREFACE.

The original title laid down for the Le Bas Essay in 1921–22 was 'Literary Principles of the Renaissance writers.' In the limited time at my disposal, however, I found it necessary to confine my attention to a few aspects only of so wide a subject; and I have accordingly (with the permission of the adjudicators) altered the title so as to make it more appropriate to the modest scope of this essay.

To produce anything like a complete study of Renaissance literary theory a much longer period of research would be needed; and consequently, as the regulations require the publication of the prize essay, I have thought it best, at this stage, to publish it virtually as it stands.

Those portions of the Essay which deal with French and English writers are based upon my own reading of the original texts referred to, except where otherwise indicated in the footnotes. For the mediæval and Italian writers I have depended for the most part upon translations, or secondary works where no translations were available. Minturno's '*De Poeta*' and Boccaccio's '*Genealogiae Deorum*' I consulted in the original Latin; for the rest I have used the following translations:—

Dante:	*Divina Commedia* *Convito* *De Vulgari Eloquentia*	In the Temple Classics.
Petrarch:	*Secretum.* Trans. by W. H. Draper.	
Boccaccio:	*Life of Dante.* Trans. by J. R. Smith.	
Vergerius: B. Guarino: Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini: Leonardo Bruni:	*De Ingenuis Moribus* *De Ordine Docendi* *Letter to Ladislas* *De Studiis*	Trans. by W. H. Woodward, in *Vittorino da Feltre and other Humanist Educators.*
Vida:	*De Arte Poetica.* Trans. by Batteux (1771) in *Les Quatre Poétiques.*	
Scaliger:	*Select translations from the Poetics*, by F. M. Padelford.	
Giordano Bruno:	*Heroici Furori*, by L. Williams.	
Castiglione:	*Cortegiano.* Hoby's translation.	

and the following secondary works:—

Comparetti:	*Vergil in the Middle Ages.*
Karl Vossler:	*Poetische Theorien in der Italienischen Frührenaissance.*
	P. Aretino's Künstlerisches Bekenntnis.
Pierre Villey:	*Les Sources Italiennes de Du Bellay.*

Nolhac : *Pétrarque et l'humanisme.*
H. B. Charlton : *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry.*
Breitinger : *Les Unités d' Aristote avant le Cid de Corneille.*
Spingarn : *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance.*
Saintsbury : *History of Criticism.*

For the section on the Spanish writers I have used Ormsby's translation of *Don Quijote*, and Brewster's translation of Lope de Vega's *' Arte Nueva ' ;* also

Schevill : *Cervantes.*
Martin Hume : *Spanish Influence in English Literature.*

I received assistance in paraphrasing the passage from Tirso de Molina, of which no English translation appears to exist.

In order to bring out the relations between the critical ideas of the ancients, and those of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, I consulted translations of Plato's *Republic, Symposium, Ion,* etc. ; Aristotle's *Poetics ;* Padelford's essay on Plutarch's *Theory of Poetry ;* Horace's *Epistle to the Pisos ;* Tertullian's *De Spectaculis* and St. Basil's *Address to Young Men on the reading of Greek Authors.*

I have also found the following works useful in endeavouring to place ' the literary principles of the Renaissance writers ' in their historical relations to the general evolution of criticism and æsthetic theory :—

Bosanquet : *History of Æsthetic.*
Croce : *Æsthetic (Ainslie's translation).*
Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille.
The Essence of Æsthetic (1921).
Emile Krantz : *L'ésthetique de Descartes.*
Spingarn : *Introd. to Critical Essays of the 17th Century.*
Tolstoy : *What is Art ?*
Santayana : *Reason in Art.*
Richards, Ogden and Wood : *Foundations of Æsthetics.*
Middleton Murry : *Aspects of Literature.*

I have indicated in footnotes my obligations to the various critical prefaces of the editors of reprints.

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Tendencies in Renaissance Literary Theory.

I.

THE DEFENCE OF POETRY.

(i.) Origins of the Controversy and its Course in the Italian Renaissance.

"*St. Augustine* . . . You are charmed with the very chains that are dragging you to your death, and, what is most sad of all, you glory in them!

Petrarch. What may these chains be of which you speak?

St. Augustine. Love and glory.

Petrarch. Great Heavens! What is this I hear? You call these things chains? And you would break them from me, if I would let you?"[1]

In his little book called *Secretum meum*, written about 1342, Petrarch gives us, in the form of a dialogue between himself and the spirit of St. Augustine, an illuminating sidelight on the moral dilemma which confronted lovers of earthly beauty in the later Middle Ages. St. Augustine stands for the mediæval-Christian ideal of renunciation; Petrarch argues for the value and strength of human love and ambition, and though he bows to the authority of the ascetic, we feel he is but imperfectly convinced. 'My principle is,' he says, 'that, as concerning the glory which we may hope for here below, it is right for us to seek it while we are here below. One may expect to enjoy that other more radiant glory in heaven, when we shall have there arrived, and when one will have no more care or wish for the glory of earth.'[2] He is trying to break down the rigid barrier of mediæval dualism, and to establish a place in the scheme of things for human emotions. In his desire to bridge over the hitherto impassable gulf between spirit and matter he anticipates the fundamental sentiment of the Renaissance, that (to quote Samuel Butler) 'the whole duty of man is to serve both God and Mammon.'

The feeling that 'æsthetic gratification is a sensual sin'[3] was not peculiar to the Middle Ages. It is the corollary of the ancient and ineradicable conception, common to all races and

(1) *Petrarch's Secret*, trans. by Wm. H. Draper, p. 109.
(2) *Ibid.* p. 176.
(3) Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, p. 170.

times, that life is a battle with the forces of evil. In the state-militant or the church-militant the individuals are always mobilised ; they are to live with girded loins and eager eyes fixed upon the vision of deliverance. The things which the individual finds good, his affections and his sensuous joys, must all be relegated that he may contribute to the larger social good. While the enemy is at the gate there is no time for song and play. Plato, fearing for the efficiency of his state-militant, banished poets and all forms of music save the martial and the religious. ' The joy which Plato as much as any one could feel in sensuous art he postponed, as a man in mourning might, until life should be redeemed from baseness.' [1] Plato censured existing poetry from three points of view : morally and theologically, because it conveyed, through a noxious mythology, false ideas of the gods [2] ; philosophically, because its products (like those of painting) were imitations of appearances, and so three times removed from reality [3] ; and psychologically, because it ' awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason,' thus breaking up that harmony and equilibrium of the soul which it is the aim of philosophy to produce. Nevertheless these objections appear as comparatively unimportant strictures on the deficiencies of contemporary art when placed by the side of his conception of the ideal function of the beautiful, and especially the beautiful in music (confined to the Dorian and Phrygian modes) : ' Let our artists rather be those who are gifted to discern the true nature of the beautiful and graceful ; then will our youth dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds, and receive the good in everything ; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the eye and ear, like a health-giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason.' [4] No more thrilling ' defence of poetry ' was ever penned in after centuries than this sentence—written by the man whom Croce calls ' the author of the only great negation of art.' [5] But, alas, in considering the poetry of Greece, Plato was unable to make the Crocean identification of art and beauty, ' so must we after the manner of lovers give her up, though not without a struggle.'

For the Christian church, too, all art was pernicious, except that which subserved the prevailing religious consciousness. But here the problem was complicated by the fact that all the chief works of art known to the Middle Ages were the products of that pagan civilisation from whose ' abominations ' it was precisely the mission of the Church to keep men unspotted. The early Middle Ages were thus much exercised as to the proper attitude of the Christian towards pagan literature. Tertullian has no doubt

(1) Santayana, *Reason in Art*, p. 176.
(2) Plato, *Rep.* Bks. II. and III. (Jowett's trans.)
(3) *Ibid.* Bk. X.
(4) Bk. III., p. 87.
(5) Croce, *Æsthetic* (trans. D. Ainslie), p. 254 ff.

on the matter. His tractate against plays[1] contains a full statement of the 'rigoristic' point of view. Plays are idolatrous by origin and association [*De Spectaculis*, I—XV]. Their psychological effect is bad, 'for there is no show without disturbance of spirit,' whereas 'God hath taught us to deal with the Holy Spirit . . . tranquilly, and gently, and quietly and peacefully: not to disquiet Him by madness, nor by wrath, nor by anger, nor by grief' [XV]. They consist of counterfeit actions and passions, and 'the Author of Truth loveth not that which is false. Everything which is feigned is adultery in His sight.' [XXIII]. The sweetness of verse and melody is the devil's bait, wherefore 'all things . . . which are therein, whether they be brave, or honest, or high-sounding, or melodious, or refined, account of them forthwith as of drops of honey from a venomous reptile, and deem not thy greediness after pleasure of so much moment as the danger which cometh by its sweetness.' [XXVII]. If it is pleasure we seek, 'what greater pleasure than a disgust for pleasure itself?' [XXIX]. 'To be received with the Lord . . . here is our pleasure, where is also our desire.' Besides, if we love literature, have we not the Scriptures in which we may find 'not fables, but verities; not cunningly wrought, but simple strains'? Tertullian is the Plato of the Church-militant. The spirit of his protest lived on through succeeding ages; it appeared again in recent times with undiminished vitality, and accompanied by almost identical arguments, in Tolstoy's 'What is Art?' (1898).

But on the other hand there had never been wanting voices to speak in vindication of the æsthetic activities. From the earliest times the justification of poetry in particular was based either on a frank acceptance of the value of its pleasurable effects, or on doctrines of its moral or didactic usefulness. From various phrases in the Poetics it seems clear that Aristotle regarded the production of pleasure ("not every kind of pleasure . . . but only its own proper pleasure"[2]) as the legitimate end-in-itself of Tragedy, as of Epic. The accompanying doctrine of 'Katharsis' has been regarded as Aristotle's reply to Plato's psychological objection to tragedy, Aristotle affirming in effect that so far from disturbing the harmony of the soul, tragedy produced an equilibrium of the faculties, 'and calm of mind, all passion spent.' But of all theories of the function of poetry that which has the greatest influence in the Renaissance was the doctrine (found in Strabo, Plutarch and Horace) of utility through pleasure. For both Strabo and Plutarch Poetry is 'a kind of elementary philosophy,' providing an easy and pleasurable approach to wisdom for the young and the simple. *Omne tulit punctum*, says Horace, *qui miscuit utile dulci*. Translated into mediæval terms this conception led to the method of allegorical interpretation by which pagan literature was partially reconciled to Christianity. Men were accustomed to seek for deeply-hidden meanings in the Old Testament; and had not

(1) Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, trans. by C. Dodgson.
(2) Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chs. 14 and 26. Trans. by Bywater.

Christ Himself taught in parables? Few of the early ecclesiastical writers took Tertullian's extreme line. Pagan literature was studied in the schools[1]; and writers like St. Jerome and St. Augustine seem never to have lost the love of Cicero and Vergil which they acquired in their youth, though they reproached themselves for it. St. Jerome dreamed that an angel rebuked him with the words '*Ciceronianus es, non Christianus.*'[2] But St. Basil pointed the way to a solution of the difficulty in his *Address to young men on the right use of Greek literature.* 'Holy Scripture leads us into the life eternal. But so long as our immaturity forbids our understanding their deep thought we exercise our spiritual perceptions upon profane writings—which are not altogether different, and in which we perceive the truth as it were in shadows and in mirrors.'[3]

For the West it was Vergil above all who represented the classical tradition; and his apotheosis in the Middle Ages illustrates the process by which literature (which until the Renaissance still meant only classical literature) won its way into Christendom. Already in the sixth century Fulgentius in his *De Continentia Vergiliana* explained the whole of the Aeneid allegorically.[4] In the twelfth century John of Salisbury said that Vergil had, under the guise of legend, expressed the truths of all philosophy.'[5] By this time the interpretation of literature had been reduced to a system; the common view, which is found in Dante,[6] and again later in Savonarola, was that every work, including Scripture, could be understood in four ways: the literal, the moral, the allegorical, and the anagogic. Vergil, too, was regarded as an unbaptised Christian; the 'nova progenies' passage in the fourth Eclogue was considered to be a prophecy of the coming of Christ; and the poet figures in ecclesiastical painting and sculpture along with saints and prophets. In Canto XXII. of Dante's *Purgatorio* the poet Statius tells Vergil that he owed to him his conversion to Christianity. "Thou first didst send me towards Parnassus to drink in its caves, and then didst light me on to God. Thou didst like one who goes by night, and carries the light behind him, and profits not himself, but maketh persons wise that follow him, when thou saidst: 'The world is renewed, justice returns, the first age of man, and a new progeny descends from heaven.'"[7]

By the time of Dante, then, this movement of thought had so transfigured the ancients that they had become objects of awe and veneration. Mediæval eyes began to see classic times as a mirage in which moved the mighty forms of omniscient philosophers.

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(1) Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, p. 82.
(2) *Ibid.* p. 82.
(3) Saint Basil's *Address.* Trans. by Padelford, p. 103.
(4) Comparetti, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
(5) Quoted by Comparetti, p. 117.
(6) *Convivio* II. 1.
(7) *Purgatorio*, XXII., 64–72. Trans. by Carlyle.

Vergil is 'famoso saggio'[1] and 'savio gentil che tutto seppe'; Aristotle is 'il mæstro di color che sanno.'[2] The poet is also philosopher and wise man—'Vates'—and poetry is 'altera Philosophia' or 'altera Theologia'[3] indifferently. This view is developed in Boccaccio's *Life of Dante*, and in his *Genealogiæ Deorum*. 'Poetical creations are not vain and simple fables or marvels, as many blockheads suppose, but . . . beneath them are hid the sweetest fruits of historical and philosophical truth.'[4] Poetry originated in the service of the Gods in primitive times; afterwards it was employed in the praise of the great deeds of kings and heroes. Poetry *is* Theology; and Theology is contained in the Bible, in which the Holy Spirit teaches by parable just as the heathen poets did. "Theology is simply the poetry of God'[5]—thus boldly did Boccaccio carry the war into the enemy's country. Like many a writer of the later Renaissance, Boccaccio feels the need of defending poetry against Plato, and he argues that "minime poetæ omnes jussu Platonis pellendi sunt urbibus."[6]

With the decline of the mediæval Christian "Lebensanschauung" there came a cleavage in the close partnership which poetry and theology had hitherto maintained by means of allegory and the doctrine of the 'Poeta-Vates.' Petrarch, as we have seen in the passage quoted above, keenly felt the growing distinction between the life lived in pursuit of fame and earthly laurels, and the life of present renunciation that eternal glory might be won hereafter. 'Accidie,' of which Petrarch confesses himself also to have been a victim, was the characteristic neurosis of the Middle Ages. Perhaps this strange form of melancholy had been set up by an ascetic conception of life which ignored or inhibited too many of the natural instincts of man in this world. However this may be, interest was now transferred from theology to the study of the classics; and the age of grammarians, philologists and 'orators' supervened. The 'defence of poetry' on the old lines became less vital; those who theorised about literature needed less to justify its presence than to settle the burning questions of how far the ancients must be imitated, and whether the new vernacular languages could become worthy literary vehicles. After the resuscitation of Aristotle's *Poetics* towards the close of the fifteenth century, 'imitation' became the catchword of the Renaissance writers. Scaliger speaks of 'imitation' as the end of poetry,[7] though he adds, like a true son of his time, 'its ulterior end is instruction.' 'Imitation,' with Vida and Scaliger, meant at least as much imitation of the classics as of nature. By comparing the Vergil of Dante with the

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(1) Dante, *Inferno* I. 89.
(2) *Ibid.* IV., 131.
(3) Albertino Mussato, quoted by Vossler, *Poetische Theorien in der Italienischen Frührenaissance*, p. 5.
(4) Boccaccio's *Life of Dante*. Trans. by J. R. Smith, p. 16.
(5) *Ibid.*, p. 54.
(6) Boccaccio, *Genealogiæ Deorum*, XIX.
(7) Scaliger, *Poetics*, Bk. I., p. 18. Trans. by Padelford.

Vergil of Scaliger we can see how far-reaching was the change of outlook which had accompanied the growth of 'humanism.' For Dante, Vergil was above all the 'famoso saggio,' and the prophet of Christ. For Scaliger, Vergil was the unsurpassable literary model, the perpetual object for imitation, almost the 'nature methodised' of Pope. 'Though the archetype of nature is altogether perfect in outline and proportions, the actual product suffers many hindrances through circumstances of parentage, climate, time, and place. So we have not been able to get from nature a single pattern such as the ideas of Vergil furnish us . . .'[1]

But though the Renaissiance writers reserved their main interest for questions of formal excellence, they did not on that account (with the exception of Castelvetro ; see below, p. 15) attain much nearer to any theory of poetry as part of an autonomous, self-vindicating æsthetic activity. Most of the Renaissance critics, when they turn from formal and rhetorical details to consider the functions of poetry, retain the traditional apologetic tone, defending it from the point of view of 'pedagogic hedonism.'[2] Horace's famous *omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*[3] was their favourite text, together with the passage in which he describes how poets were the first law-givers and founders of social order: *sic honor et nomen divinis vatis atque carminibus venit,*[4]

The value of works of art is always ultimately judged by reference to some conception of the main purpose of life, to some postulated definition of 'good'—whether that consist in salvation, worldly success, contemplation or ecstasy (to name but a few of the possible positions). The chaotic state of modern criticism is a corollary of the indeterminate flux of modern notions of 'good.' A common body of critical doctrines is only possible when there exists some authoritative and universally accepted standard of ethical values. In the Renaissance, in spite of the sensuality and lawlessness which we think of as characteristic of the period, those who thought and wrote about literature did possess such a standard to which they instinctively made reference in their theoretic judgments, however little their practice may have accorded with it. This standard was a blend of the inherited Christian doctrine of salvation with pagan or neo-pagan ideas of the exploitation of the present world—'the service of God and Mammon.' No humanist doubted that a man should seek the kingdom of heaven, but he should also seek cultivation in the 'humanities'; he must strive to attain a good style, and be proficient in arms as well as in letters ; in short, he must be the sort of fine gentleman that God would "hesitate to damn." This essentially practical view of life naturally implied an ethical or utilitarian theory of literature. Pleasure was permissible, but it must be possible to justify it (theoretically at least) by proving that it conduced to

(1) Scaliger's *Poetics* III., 25. (Padelford's trans., p. 52).
(2) Croce, *Æsthetic*, p. 251. (Ainslie).
(3) Horace, *Epistle to Pisos*, 343.
(4) *Ibid.* 390—401.

virtue. No wonder then that Horace's mixture of the *utile* with the *dulce* appealed to the writers of this period as the best test of literary value. Vergerius, one of the early humanist writers on education, expresses the practical ideal in his *De Ingenuis Moribus* (A.D. 1392). 'The man who has surrendered himself absolutely to the attractions of Letters or of speculative thought follows perhaps a self-regarding end, and is useless as a citizen or as prince.'[1] Yet Vergerius has the true humanist belief in Letters as the foundation of all sound education: 'There is still a horde—as I must call them—of people who, like the Emperor Licinius, denounce learning and the Arts as a danger to the State and hateful in themselves. In reality the very opposite is the truth.'[2] The humanist educators conceded for the most part that a certain alertness of the selective powers was desirable in reading the poets. For example, Battista Guarino in his *De Ordine docendi et studendi* (written in 1459) admits the Platonic position that poetry has in it 'a power to disturb and excite the spirit,' like the Polypod, 'which, indeed, is pleasant enough to the taste, but provokes terrible visitations in the hour of sleep.' 'We need then to be careful in reading the fictions of the poets to fix our thought rather on the underlying truths which are therein concealed than upon the imaginations in which they are expressed. In this way we are not disturbed by the impieties, cruelties and horrors which we find there; we judge these things simply by their congruity to the character and situations described. We criticise the artist, not the novelist.'[3] This is a significant approach to the modern method of judgment on purely æsthetic grounds. Guarino goes on to argue (like Aristotle[4]) that "what in real life repels us may in fiction win our admiration by its skilful presentation.' Then, having gone far enough along this amoral line, he returns as if with a sigh of relief, to 'But where the poet treats with the same skill of things in themselves noble, then we may accept his guidance without reserve.' In essence Guarino's position differs but little from that of Walter Pater, when, at the conclusion of his essay on *Style*, he argues that if art, which is already 'good' for formal reasons be further devoted 'to such presentment of truth . . . as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately, as with Dante, to the glory of God, it will also be *great* art.' The public schools of England retained the typical humanist ideals almost in their integrity until recent times.

A similar point of view appears in the tractate of Lionardo Bruni d'Arezzo *De Studiis et Literis* (c. 1405). Bruni had already published a version of St. Basil[5] as a retort to Friar Dominici's denunciation of the growing contemporary absorption in pagan

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(1) Translated by W. H. Woodward, in *Vittorino da Feltre*, p. 110.
(2) *Ibid.* p. 104.
(3) Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
(4) *Poetics*, Bk. 4.
(5) See the passage of St. Basil quoted above.

literature.[1] The study of the poets is for him the third necessary ingredient (along with Religion and History) in a sound scheme of education, since one of the main objects to be attained is grace and style of expression. His psychological defence of poetry has a modern ring in it which is rare in Renaissance writers. Answering those who disapprove of poetry he writes: 'when we recall the peculiar affinity of rhythm and metre to our emotions and our intelligence, we must conclude that nature herself is against such headlong critics.'[2] Aristotle had anticipated this view when he affirmed one of the origins of poetry to be our natural delight in harmony and rhythm.[3] But even after the re-discovery of Aristotle at the end of the fifteenth century, Renaissance writers for the most part neglected this hint he had given as to the nature of the æsthetic activity; they insisted on regarding the 'Poetics' as a practical guide to the art of writing. Bruni's theory is in effect a remarkable tentative towards the modern conception of the organic nature of form, the identity of the expression with the intuition. But whereas Croce, for instance, having established this identity, is not concerned with the further problem of estimating the relative value to humanity of different intuition-expressions, Bruni never forgets his practical humanist ideal. He concludes thus: 'hence . . . any one ignorant of, and indifferent to, *so valuable an aid to knowledge* and *so ennobling a source of pleasure* can by no means be entitled to be called educated.' Like Guarino, he believes, however, that where literal truth is not aimed at, poetic fictions leave no moral impression, and may be admired for their artistry. In this context he cannot refrain from a sly hit at the ecclesiastics: 'The Scriptures, on the other hand, whose literal accuracy no one questions, not seldom cause me misgivings on this head.'

Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini[4] is likewise in favour of wise selection; in reading the poets we must 'welcome all that they can render in praise of integrity and in condemnation of vice.' But his humanist preoccupation with formal excellence gets the better of his practical ideal with charming inconsistency when he warns the King of Bohemia on no account to read Bohemian History (a subject in which surely a humanist King of Bohemia should be well grounded) because 'such would be but the productions of mere ignorant chroniclers . . . destitute of attraction in form, in style, or in grave reflections.' Aeneas Sylvius has an interesting suggestion of his own about the relation of poetry to ethics: 'The poets, the orators and the historians suggest perhaps rather than enforce virtue.' This is really the position finally adopted by Professor A. C. Bradley: 'poetry,' he says, 'should seek its own end without attempting co-ordinate functions,' yet he suspects that 'the unity

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(1) Woodward, *op. cit.* p. 120.
(2) *Ibid.* p. 130.
(3) *Poetics*, Ch. 4.
(4) *Letter to King Ladislas of Bohemia*, 1450. In Woodward, p. 150.

of human nature is so intimate' that 'the pursuit of poetry for its own sake is the pursuit both of truth and of goodness.'[1]

The old 'rigoristic' objections appeared again in Savonarola at the end of the fifteenth century,[2] and the corresponding 'defence of poetry' was carried on for the most part on the well-known Horatian lines throughout the sixteenth. Minturno's *De Poeta* [1559] contains a typical array of these arguments: the antiquity and divine origins of poetry, how poets founded all civil order, how poetry includes all wisdom and philosophy, and how unique are its powers of moving.[3] Minturno also expresses the lofty disdain of the true Renaissance scholar for the Middle Ages and its works. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, '*usque ad Petrarchae tempora,*' '*politiores literas*' were '*consopitas, ne obrutas dicam, et sepultas.*'[4] With but a few notable exceptions Renaissance criticism ignored the whole literary output of the so-called 'dark ages.'

In the sixteenth century, however, the leading motive in literary theory was not the 'Defence of Poetry,' but the establishment of that code of neo-classic rules which, accepted and hardened by France in the next century, dominated European literature until the end of the eighteenth century. The long series of Aristotelian commentaries from Robortelli [1548] to Piccolomini [1575], which formed so large a proportion of the critical writings of Italy in the 16th century, so far from elucidating the really suggestive and emancipatory ideas of Aristotle, served only to set him up as a perpetual dictator, and to attach to his writings a legislative force they were never intended to have. This was the age of 'Arts of Poetry'—when critics conceived it to be their function not to estimate the value of concrete works (criticism in this sense was as yet almost unknown), but to furnish practical text-books on the art of writing. These founders of neo-classicism could take the defence of poetry for granted. Scaliger indeed praises Horace's ***omne tulit punctum*** passage, and admits instruction as the ulterior aim of poetry, but he is so sure of his ground that he can dismiss Plato with '*respiceat ipse sese quot ineptas, quot spurcas fabellas inserat.*'[5] What is of real importance to him is that we should imitate Vergil, and observe dramatic verisimilitude.

Castelvetro (*La Poetica d'Aristotele*, 1570) in many ways stands apart from his contemporaries. He lays down explicitly that the aim of poetry is delight, and delight alone.[6] Poetry must not be confused with politics and sociology; it has laws of its own and must follow them. The State may reserve the right of censor-

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(1) A. C. Bradley—note to *Poetry for Poetry's Sake.*
(2) Savonarola's famous 'Bonfire of Vanities' took place in Florence in 1497.
(3) *De Poeta*, pp. 14–15.
(4) *De Poeta*, p. 14.
(5) Scaliger, *Poetics.* (Padelford), p. 14.
(6) 'Il fine della poesia è il diletto'—*P. d'A.*, p. 552—quoted by Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, p. 80.

ship on works when produced, but it must not meddle with the purely æsthetic process of production. 'Il fine del reggimento della città è diverso del fine della poetica'; the Government is concerned to maintain order, 'e'l fine della poetica riguarda il diletto simplice, e la ricreatione degli ascoltanti.'[1] Moreover, it is not the pleasure of the aristocratic, the courtly and the cultured few that Castelvetro is thinking of—it is that of the people at large, the 'moltitudine rozza.' With characteristic independence, too, he has a theory to replace Aristotle's 'recognition' as the source of æsthetic pleasure: it is delight and awe at the marvellous and the novel, and admiration of the ingenuity of the author.

Tasso very nearly arrived at this severance of æsthetic from social principles, but 'Plato has too strong a hold on him.' 'The poet,' he says, 'ought to have much regard to teaching, if not in so far as he is poet (since teaching is not the end of poetry), yet in so far as he is a citizen and a member of the state.'[2] Castelvetro stands alone amongst Renaissance writers in asserting the autonomy of the æsthetic activities. It is noteworthy, however, that in these writers of the late Italian Renaissance Christian scruples no longer play any part; any scruples that remain are exclusively secular and Platonic.

(ii.)—France.

In France the principal critical writers (those of the Pléiade group) fixed their main interest not on the defence or theory of poetry, but on the practical question of ennobling the mother-tongue, and creating a body of vernacular literature to challenge comparison with the classics. The old scruples were so secondary to this patriotic enthusiasm for obtaining a vernacular counterpart to every ancient author, that Du Bellay, after counselling the imitation of Martial, adds impatiently 'si la lascivité ne te plaist, mesle le profitable avecques le doulz.'[3] Nevertheless some of the French writers, especially Ronsard, have a very lofty conception of the poetic office, and lay great stress on the Platonic idea of 'divine afflatus.' Sibilet begins his *Art Poétique François* [1548] with a chapter 'De l'antiquité de la Poesie et de son excellence.' Poetic art is closely akin to divine science, and its practice depends upon divine inspiration. Plato called poets the children of God, Ennius called them sacred, and all the learned have called them divine. The technique of poetry is only 'une escorce . . . qui couvre artificiélement sa naturéle sève et son ame naturélement divine.'[4] Moses ('premier divin Poéte'), David, Solomon and the Prophets all praised God and prophesied in 'carmes mésurés'; so did the Greeks and Romans, and so do we still. Hence the great honour in which poets have always been held by princes (this is the

(1) Quoted by Charlton, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
(2) *Discorsi dell' Arte Poetica*, p. 203—quoted by Charlton, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
(3) *Deffense et Illustration* [1549], ed. Chamard, p. 207.
(4) Sibilet, *Art Poetique François*, ed. F. Gaiffe, p. 9 ff.

familiar defence 'by testimonial')[1]; hence the honour in which they are again being held since the revival of letters in Italy; and may we not hope before long to see poetry, under the patronage of Henri II., 'autant sainte et autant auguste que elle fut soubz César Auguste'?

Jacques Le Peletier du Mans begins his *Art Poëtique* [1555] in a very similar vein, adding to the doctrine of the 'fureur poëtique' the usual Horatian argument that poets were the original 'métres et reformateurs de la vie.'

In the mind of Ronsard 'Dieu' was absolutely equivalent to Jupiter or any other God; and the Muses, and Apollo, and Venus 'et autres telles deitez ne nous representent autre chose que les puissances de Dieu.'[2] Hence the poet exercises a priestly function and is sacrosanct. He must also purify his soul, since 'les Muses ne veullent loger en une ame si elle n'est bonne, saincte et vertueuse.' In his theory of Poetry Ronsard returns to the old idea that poetry was originally 'une Théologie allegoricque,' designed to instruct uneducated men by means of pleasant fables in the secrets which they could not understand if directly presented. Vauquelin de la Fresnaye stands apart from the Pléiade in disliking the Pagan deities:

> "Si les Grecs comme vous, Chrestiens eussent escrit,
> Ils eussent les hauts faits chanté de Jésus-Christ;
> Doncques à les chanter ores je vous invite."

Chapelain, in the Preface to Adonis [1620], famous for its place in the evolution of the 'unities,' states definitely that 'le vraisemblance sert d'instrument pour acheminer l'homme à la vertu; il est certain que la vraie fin de la poésie est l'utilité consistant en cette purgation.'[3] Jean Mairet (Preface to *Silvanire*, 1631), who is also chiefly interested in the unities, repeats all the old arguments about the divine origins and the 'fureur divine.'[4]

(iii.)—England.

In England there was also a vigorous patriotic-vernacular propaganda, but owing to the innate Puritanism of part of the race the moral question became here more pressing than ever, and many of the writers about literature had consequently to adopt defensive tactics. The Puritan temper, which has always been prevalent in certain classes of English society, distrusted literature and the arts on the one hand as the allurements of Satan, and on the other hand as proceeding from that sink of iniquity, the

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(1) Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Crit. Essays*, I. xxii.
(2) *Abrégé de l'Art Poetique François* [1565], ed, Laumonier, vol. VII., p. 45.
(3) Chapelain, *La. Pref. à l'Adonis*, Bovet's Introd., p. 18. [Aus Romanischen Sprachen und Litteraturen, 1905].
(4) Pref. to *Silvanire*, Chaps. 1 and 2.

Continent of Europe. Italy was especially dreaded by serious home-keeping Englishmen ; the Italy of the Borgias and Machiavelli, of Aretino and Bandello, to which so many young men of the upper classes resorted. The saying that ' the Italianate Englishman is a devil incarnate ' was a common catchword of the time. Thomas Drant in 1567[1] protested against the influx of Italian novels (perhaps especially referring to the translations in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, 1566), complaining that ' flim flames, and gue gawes, be they never so sleight and slender, are soner rapte up thenne are those which be lettered and Clerkly makings . . .' He condemns the story of Romeo and Juliet, just as Tolstoy did three hundred years afterwards : ' This and such lyke is easye to be understanded and easye to be indited . . . I take them to be rype tounged tryfles, Venemouse Allectyves, and sweete vanityes.' Roger Ascham was no bigoted Puritan, but he also feared the contaminating influence of Italian literature and Italian morals. If a young man travel in Italy, ' Some *Circes* shall make him, of a plaine English man, a right *Italian*.'[2] ' These be the inchantements of *Circes*, brought out of *Italie*, to marre mens maners in England, much by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fond bookes, of late translated out of *Italian* into English, sold in every shop in London, commended by honest titles the soner to corrupt honest maners . . . Mo Papistes be made, by your mery bookes of *Italie*, than by your earnest bookes of *Louvain*.'[3] He even ascribes the production of ' bawdie bookes . . . out of the *Italian* tonge ' to organised Papal propaganda. He then attacks the mediæval romances : ' when Papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, savyng certaine bookes of Chevalrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idle Monkes, or wanton Chanons : as one example, *Morte Arthure :* the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrie. But even ' ten *Morte Arthures* do not the tenth part so much harm ' as one of these Italian books, which merely open up such new ways to vice ' as the simple head of an English man is not able to invent, nor never was hard of in England before, yea when Papistrie overflowed all.'[4] Ascham had a firm belief in the traditional solid qualities of Englishmen, and his aim was to add to these a tincture of sound classical learning. His ideal is a Protestant and insular version of the practical humanist ideal which we found expressed by the Italian educators of the fifteenth century. Harrison in his *Description of England* takes up the same strain about the gentlemen who travel in Italy : ' they bring home nothing but mere atheism, infidelity, vicious conversation, and ambitious and proud behaviour . . .'[5]

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(1) Pref. to translation of Horace.
(2) Ascham, *Eng. Works* (Camb. Eng. Classics), p. 225.
(3) *Ibid.* p. 229.
(4) *Ibid.* pp. 230 ff.
(5) Harrison's *Description of England*, Camelot Classics, p. 8.

The feeling that poetry, and especially plays, rendered men effeminate and generally weakened their moral fibre appeared again in Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* [1579]. Gosson applauds the 'manners of England in old time,' when Englishmen were capable if necessary of standing 'up to the chinne many dayes in marshes without victualles.'[1] But now—*quantum mutatus ab illo*! 'The exercise that is nowe among us is banquetting, playing, piping and dauncing, and all such delights as may winne us to pleasure, or rocke us in sleepe.' Theatres are simply haunts of vice. If any man ask why Gosson himself has written plays in the past, he replies, 'I have sinned, and am sorry for my fault.' 'Thus have I set downe the abuses of poets, pipers and players, which bring us to pleasure, slouth, sleepe, sinne, and without repentance to death and the devill.'[2]

The task of defending poetry against these arguments from abuse was the more difficult because in effect there did not yet exist a great and notable body of English literature. Sidney finds himself hampered in his defence by the inferior quality of contemporary literature; he and the other defenders had consequently to argue on the broad abstract lines suggested by the Italians, passing over as well as might be the awkward fact that if bawdy translations and licentious stage-plays held the field, it was because there was a deplorable vacuum to be filled. This uncomfortable feeling is evident as early as 1531 in Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governour*. 'For the name of a poete, whereat nowe (specially in this realme), men have such indignation that they use onely poetes and poetry in the contempte of eloquence, was in ancient tyme in hygh estimation.'[3] Then he proceeds on orthodox lines to lay down that poetry was the first philosophy, 'mixting serious matter with thynges that were pleasaunt'; and that poets possessed a 'misticall and inspired' science in virtue of which they were called 'vates.' He rebuts the 'false opinion that nowe rayneth that in the warkes of poets is contayned nothynge but baudry.' On the contrary, we might as well say that sermons increase the very sins they denounce. He concludes regretfully (but with perhaps a note of hope in the word 'yet') that 'in the latine [there is] incomparably more grace and delectation to the reader than our English tongue may yet comprehende.'[4]

Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique* [1553][5] repeats in full the old allegorical argument. The poets with their fables are all striving 'to the amendment of maners, to the knowledge of the trueth, to the setting forth of Nature's work, or els the understanding of some notable thing done.' For example, the story of Ulysses is

(1) Gosson, *Schoole of Abuse*, p. 24.
(2) *Schoole of Abuse*, p. 32.
(3) Elyot's *Governour*, Vol. I., p. 120.
(4) *Ibid.* p. 129.
(5) Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (ed. G. H. Mair), p. 195.

merely 'a lively picture of man's miserie in this life,' similarly Tantalus, Icarus, Midas and Hercules all stand for moral qualities or defects. 'The poetes were wisemen, and wished in hart the redresse of things,' and they chose to teach men 'by shadowes what they should doo in good sooth,' so that only the worthy might understand.

In 1579 Thomas Lodge took up the defence of poetry in reply to Gosson. In this essay, as usual, the present state of affairs is disregarded, and the defence is based on the allegorical significance of classical poetry, on the veneration in which the poetic office had always been held, and on the fact that the Hebrew prophets wrote in verse. 'I reason not that all poets are holy, but I affirme that poetry is a heavenly gift, a perfit gift, then which I know not greater pleasure.'[1] This sentence epitomises the whole controversy. The Puritan urges that many poets are unholy, and much poetry of evil tendency; let us therefore expel poetry from our midst, even though we lose some good corn along with the tares. The defender despises the tares, and is confident that an admixture of them in the poetic meal will not impair a healthy moral digestion. Two opposing estimates of human nature meet face to face in this matter. Thomas Nash,[2] after re-stating the theory of allegorical interpretation, puts the point thus: 'It is an old question, and it hath beene often propounded, whether it were better to have moderate affections, or no affections. The Stoicks said none. The Peripeticians answered, to have temperate affections: in this respect I am a professed Peripetician, mixing profit with pleasure and precepts of doctrine with delightful invention.' Moreover (and here we have the exact converse of the Puritan distrust) 'out of the filthiest Fables may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected.'

Though Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* [c. 1583] follows the traditional lines of argument, it is suffused with a spirit of generous enthusiasm which serves the cause of poetry better than any argument, and gives this essay a place in literature as well as in the history of criticism. He begins in the Horation manner with Orpheus and Amphion and the poet-vates. Soon we find that he feels what is really the weak point in the whole defence—the fact that just then poetry 'is among us throwne downe to so ridiculous an estimation'; nevertheless he means to show that, rightly applied, it 'deserveth not to bee scourged out of the Church of God.' Poetry creates another and a better Nature by idealisation; its method is 'imitation' (in the sense of idealised representation), and its end is 'to teach and delight.'[3] The ultimate end of all learning is to 'lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his owne divine essence'; and the Poet can do this more effectually than the Philosopher, with his 'obscure definitions,'

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(1) Th. Lodge, *Defence of Poetry* (in Gregory Smith's Eliz. Crit. Essays, I., p. 75).

(2) Th. Nash, *Anatomy of Absurdity* (G. Smith, I., p. 328).

(3) Sidney's *Apologie*, (G. Smith I., p. 158.)

or the Historian—' captived to the trueth of a foolish world ' ; for ' with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner.' Thus the Poet wins the mind ' from wickednesse to vertue : even as the childe is often brought to take most wholsom things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant tast.' Human nature can be trusted to reject the evil which is set forth (for example) in Comedies.[1] Sidney puts in a word for ' Liricke ' which raises him head and shoulders above most writers of his time : ' Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness : I never heard the olde song of Percy and Duglas that I found not my heart mooved more then with a Trumpet.' As to the complaint that Poets are liars, ' he nothing affirmes, and therefore never lyeth.' The argument from abuse might be applied to all good things : ' Doth not God's word abused breed heresie ? ' *Corruptio optimi pessima.* In reply to the story about the good old times before poetry had reduced hardy Englishmen to effeminacy, he says : ' What that before tyme was, I thinke scarcely Sphinx can tell : sith no memory is so auncient that hath the precedence of Poetrie. . . For Poetrie is the companion of the Campes.' There speaks the Elizabethan knight, the hero of Zutphen ! As for Plato, it was ' the abuse, not the thing ' that he would have banished ; and now that Christianity has taught us the truth about the Deity we may ignore Plato's fears of the false mythologies, and (fixing our attention on the *Ion*) take him as ' our Patron and not our adversarie.'

It was really no answer to the Platonic-Puritan objection to say that Poetry moves the heart more than a trumpet, since it was this very magic potency over the emotions which caused the ascetics to fear its misuse. The real defence of poetry lies in Sidney's brave confidence in the essential beauty and innocency of human emotion, a confidence beside which all the anxieties of the enemy appear ungenerous and sour.

William Webbe [1586][2] is more concerned with the present state of literature than with the defence, and most of his defensive arguments seem to be taken from the passage in Elyot's *Governour* quoted above. Though quite orthodox on the subject of joining profit with delight,[3] he definitely inclines to the side of delight, urging in one passage that the ' chiefest essence of Poetrie did alwayes for the most part consist in delighting readers with pleasure.'[4] Puttenham too [1589][5] laments the low esteem in which poetry is now held, and pleads for it on the usual grounds of its divinity, antiquity and honourable patronage by princes. But for him poetry is the ' common solace of mankind, in all his travails and cares of this transitorie life,'[6] and in the discharge

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 177.
(2) *Discourse of Eng. Poetrie* (G. Smith I., pp. 226 ff).
(3) *Ibid.* p. 250.
(4) *Ibid.* p. 235.
(5) *Arte of English Poesie,* (G. Smith, II., pp. 3 ff.)
(6) *Ibid.* Ch. X.

of these its recreative functions it may even be ' in some sort vaine, dissolute or wanton, so it be not very scandalous and of evill example.' Under the sober covering of the orthodox defensive creed there is thus in Puttenham a subtle change of attitude; instead of being the sugary coating round the moral pill poetry has become an anodyne to which weary men may have recourse to soothe their nerves.

Sir John Harington [*A Brief Apologie of Poetrie*, 1591][1] rings the changes on the old set of arguments, with variations of phrase—for example, the sugared pill is now ' Rubarb and Sugercandie.' He admits the validity of the extreme theological contention—that ' to us that are Christians, in respect of the high end of all, which is the health of our soules, not only Poetrie but all other studies of Philosophy are in a manner vaine and superfluous . . .'—but in reality he ascribes to it only that fictitious value which belonged to the currency of the Musical Banks in Erewhon. The Englishman has always been remarkable for his skill in segregating Sunday doctrines, which he venerates with great solemnity, from maxims of expediency, which he puts into daily practice. Harington goes on : ' we live with men and not with saints,' and ' few men can embrace this strict and stoicall divinitie ' ; in fine, we must concede poetry to human frailty.

In Bacon and Ben Jonson begins the seventeenth century reaction against the exuberance of the Renaissance ; warmth and high spirits give place to weight and judgment. Bacon, after calmly ascribing the whole classical revival to Martin Luther, gravely censures the men of the Renaissance—Osorius, Sturmius, Ascham and Erasmus—for hunting ' more after words than matter.' Excessive attention to style and rhetoric was a characteristic ' distemper of learning ' ; ' in sum, the whole inclination and bent of those times was rather towards copie than weight.'[2] Bacon's theory of poetry and of its functions is an epigrammatic précis of the more philosophical of the prevalent defensive theses ; though his ascription of the various branches of learning to different faculties of the mind—History to Memory, Philosophy to Reason, and Poetry to Imagination—is a symptom of the new interest the 17th century was to take in the psychology of the æsthetic processes. Poetry, then, is ' a part of learning,' and is ' nothing else but feigned history.'[3] Its use is ' to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it.' It achieves this by its power to ' join that which nature hath severed ' (this is in essence Coleridge's ' esemplastic ' power) ; and thus ' it serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality and to delectation. And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things

(1) G. Smith, II., pp. 194 ff.
(2) Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, I., 4.
(3) *Adv. of Learning*, II., 4.

to the desires of the mind.' Æsthetic pleasure is thus made equivalent to the intellectual pleasure enjoyed by the idealist in the exercise of the shaping imagination.

Ben Jonson has little or nothing to add to the general Renaissance theory of poetry. 'Poetry is a dulcet and gentle philosophy which leads on and guides us by the hand to action with a ravishing delight and incredible sweetness.'[1] The good poet must be a good man.[2] Like the Pléiade he has a lofty and essentially aristocratic conception of the dignity of Poetry, and is anxious to defend it against the rabble of groundlings and the poetasters who abuse it,[3] and cause it to appear

> 'Patcht up in remnants and old worne ragges,
> Halfe starved for want of her peculiar foode . . .'

But view her (*i.e.*, 'Poesie')

> 'Crownd with the rich traditions of a soule
> That hates to have her dignity prophand
> With any relish of an earthly thought—
> Oh then how proud a presence doth she beare!
> Then is she like her selfe, fit to be seene
> Of none but grave and consecrated eyes . . .'[4]

II.

THE DEFENCE OF THE VERNACULARS.

(i). Italy.

Whereas the 'defence of poetry,' in the sense of the establishment of the true relationship of art and ethics, has remained a live question up to the present day, the subject of the 'defence' of modern languages is now only discussed by educationists in determining the curricula of schools and universities: and, important as it still is in this relation, it has long since ceased to have any significance for literature. Yet in the Renaissance the vindication of the vernacular tongues as literary media was a subject of the most vital interest. It so happened that the prestige of the classics reached its culminating point at the very time when the newly-awakened sense of nationality was on all sides demanding expression in national, vernacular literatures. The inevitable result was a conflict, followed by a long process of adjustment of relationships between the ancient and the modern literatures. At first, especially in Italy, the fundamental question was whether the vernacular could ever become a worthy vehicle for great literature; but later on, after the growth of patriotic sentiment and the inherent necessities had decided the issue in favour of the vernaculars,

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(1) Ben Jonson, *Timber or Discoveries*, p. 75.
(2) Dedicatory Epistle of *Volpone*.
(3) Pref. to *Volpone*.
(4) From 1601 Quarto of *Every Man in his Humour* V. (i). (Given in Appx. I. of G. Smith, Vol. II).

interest was concentrated on polishing and embellishing the various mother-tongues, on producing in them examples of all the classic *genres*, and on formulating rules for the imitation of the classic models. The Renaissance writers were for the most part 'courtly makers,' and would have gladly made 'tabula rasa' of the Middle Ages, and all the mass of plebeian mediæval literature. They had no misgivings about their own superior enlightenment; like true revolutionists they wanted to abolish the past and give a new written constitution to the republic of letters.

Boccaccio says[1] that before the time of Dante the vernacular had only been used 'in the light things of love,' but 'Dante showed . . . that every lofty subject could be treated of in this medium, and made our vulgar tongue above all others glorious.' But the early champions of the vernacular had first to decide what indeed the mother-tongue was; which of the innumerable dialects was the most deserving, or by what process of combination and selection an 'illustrious vulgar' might be developed. It was this Babel of modern tongues, and the infinite subdivision of each into dialects, which had given Latin its long supremacy. Latin was thought of as 'grammar'; it was a literary and artistic product consciously evolved by the Romans as a fixed point in the flux of dialects.[2] These were the problems with which Dante grappled in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. After running through all the Italian dialects in succession, and deciding that none of them individually is 'the panther of our quest,' he declares that 'the illustrious, cardinal, courtly and curial vernacular in Italy' is 'that which belongs to all the towns in Italy, but does not appear to belong to any one of them, and by which all the municipal dialects of the Italians are measured, weighed and compared.'[3] It is 'illustrious' because exalted and splendid, swaying the hearts of men, and it should only be used by men of knowledge and genius, and in treating of noble fubjects—such as arms, love and virtue—in the 'tragic' (which or Dante means 'elevated') style. According to Boccaccio Dante's chief reason for preferring the vulgar was his desire to reach the unlearned masses[4]; though Dante also mentions his 'natural amore alla propria loquela.'[5]

After Dante, the humanist movement in Italy diverted attention from the vernacular to the worship of the classics, especially Cicero and Vergil; and not until the sixteenth century, when the whole question was reopened, was the triumph of the vernacular assured. The back-sliding began quite soon. Petrarch originally meant to devote himself to the vernacular, but was

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(1) *Life of Dante*, p. 34.
(2) Karl Vossler, *Poetische Theorien in der Ital. Frührenaissance*, p. 29.
(3) *De Vulg. Eloq., Lib. I. xvi.*
(4) *Life of Dante*, p. 67.
(5) *Convivio*, I., 5.

deterred by his dread of the ' profanum vulgus ' and its worthless judgments. The same feeling also appears in Boccaccio's twelfth Eclogue, where Calliope says to him :

' Non ego te vidi pridem vulgare canentem
In triviis carmen misero plaudente popello ? '[1]

In the fifteenth century rhetoric and latinity held the field victoriously. Valla eulogised the Latin tongue ; Guarino demanded rhetoric even in treatises on medicine and praised Beccadelli's scandalous ' Hermaphroditus ' on the ground of latinity.[2] Leon Baptista Alberti almost alone stood out for the vernacular, though even he kept to Latin in his technical works. Between 1445–1450 he wrote (in his ' Della tranquillita dell'animo '): ' who shall be so bold as to attack and persecute me if I write so that people can understand me ? '[3] Defenders of the vernacular in Italy had the advantage of being able to point to Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio as models ; thus we find Lorenzo de Medici observing that they equal or excel the classics, and concluding that ' it is rather writers and hard work that are lacking to the language than the language to writers and subjects.'[4] With the turn of the century, however, the requisite writers were soon forthcoming to decide the matter in favour of the vernacular ; Sannazaro's *Arcadia* appeared in 1504 ; Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in 1516, and Machiavelli and Guicciardini soon followed in the sphere of history and politics. Nevertheless the critical discussion went on far into the century. The whole subject is thrashed out in Bembo's *Prose della lingua volgare* [1525 ; but written in 1502] in the form of a dialogue between Giuliano de'Medici, Federigo Fregoso and Ercole Strozzi. Strozzi, who represents the traditional ' latiniser,' expresses the prevalent idea that the vulgar Italian of the day was identical with the popular Latin of the classical era, and that consequently Latin was as much the natural literary medium for the sixteenth century as it was in the Augustan age. Fregoso replies, ' You are deceived ; the two languages in those days were not Italian and Latin, but Greek and Latin. The great Latins rejected the learned language in favour of their mother tongue.' Greece itself had many dialects, but Attic prevailed, why then should not Tuscan be the literary language of Italy—the Tuscan of the great 14th century writers ?[5] Aretino, the arch-rebel and heretic of the Italian Renaissance, scented pedantry in this advocacy of the archaic Tuscan of the great Florentines. ' Every respectable writer in the vernacular,' he declares, ' will almost invariably avoid the Tuscan of Boccaccio.'[6]

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(1) Quoted by Vossler, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
(2) *Ibid.* pp. 70–78.
(3) Pierre Villey, *Les Sources Italiennes de Du Bellay.* Introd. p. xv.
(4) *Ibid.* p. xix.
(5) Pierre Villey, *op. cit.* Introd. Ch. II.
(6) Quoted by Vossler, *P. Aretino's Künstlerisches Bekenntnis* [Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher, 1900], p. 58.

' The true imitators of Petrarch and Boccaccio are those who express their own impressions with the same sweetness and grace as they did, and not those who steal their Quinci, quindi, soventi and snelli—and even whole verses.'

Castiglione's famous *Cortegiano* [1528] contains a dialogue on this subject.[1] The discussion turns on the question whether the language of Petrarch and Boccaccio should be imitated in literature, or the ordinary speech of every day. ' Syr Frederick ' maintains that Petrarch and Boccaccio should be models for literature though not for speech, the ' Count ' (representing Castiglione's own views) holds that the present-day usage of the courts is to be followed. Trissino [*El Castellano:* 1529] argues for the language of Dante, as being the only veritable ' Italian.'[2] Sperone Speroni in the *Dialogue of the Languages* [1542], which as a vigorous defence of the vernacular served (according to M. Pierre Villey)[3] as a model for Du Bellay's *Deffense*, inclines to the 14th century Tuscan view. Between the extremists on both sides there existed a class of men like Trissino, Tolomei and Alamanni—essentially an Italian Pléiade —whose aim was to ' illustrate ' their native language ' by acclimatising in it the *genres* of the ancients.'[4]

(ii). France.

Je vy que des François le langage trop bas
A terre se trainoit sans ordre ny compas :
Adoncques pour hausser ma lange maternelle
Indonté du labeur, je travaillay pour elle.
Je fis des mots nouveaux, je r'appelay les vieux,
Si bien que son renom je poussay jousqu' aux cieux.

Et mis la poësie en tel ordre qu' apres
Le François fut egal aux Romains et aux Grecs.

(Ronsard, *Œuvres* V., p. 425).

Owing to the long-standing political supremacy of the Ile de France the question of dialects did not arise to complicate the ' defence and illustration ' of the French language.[5] Neither could there be any question of returning to the language of the ' Roman de la Rose.' The Pléiade wanted a new literature *per saltum*, and they proceeded to attain their ends with the same lofty pride, and the same contempt for the immediate past as distinguished the men of 1789. The two pressing needs were, first to regularise, standardise and enrich the language ; rescuing its grammar (and its orthography) from barbarism and adding new derivatives ; then in this purified and enhanced medium to produce works in the classic

(1) Hoby's Translation [*Tudor Translations*], pp. 63–79.
(2) Villey, *op. cit.* Introd., p. xxxiii.
(3) *Op. cit.*, Ch. II.
(4) *Ibid.*, p. 74.
(5) *Ibid.*, p. 31.

genres which would at once place French on a level with Greek and Latin—as Ronsard says in the passage quoted above. Translation from the classics was regarded as one of the most honourable ways of ennobling the vernacular. On the whole this enthusiasm for the native tongue was one of the healthiest symptoms of Renaissance times, although the classicising temper which everywhere accompanied it did much to restrain its emancipatory tendency—and nowhere more effectually than in France.

The cult of the vernacular was in full progress in France early in the sixteenth century. It appears in the Prologue of Claude de Seyssel's translation of Justin [1509], dedicated ' à tres chrestien et tres victorieux Roy Loys XII. de ce nom.' The Latins, he says, translated from the Greek, and imposed their language on their conquered provinces. Louis XII. will also impose French on the numerous provinces he will conquer, but ' d'autre part aussi par l'autre moyen plus exquis, et qui fait plus à louer, vous travaillez à enrichir et magnifier la langue Françoise '—by commissioning translations (such as the present) from the Greek and Latin authors.[1]

Geofroy Tory, in the address ' Aux Lecteurs ' prefixed to his *Champ Fleury* [1529] bewails the barbarous condition of the language. Four classes of people, he says, are at present corrupting the French tongue : the ' escumeurs de Latin ' (he gives examples of their lingo : ' d'espumon la verbocinotion latiale, et transfreton la sequane au dilucule et crepuscule ') ; the ' Plaisanteurs,' the ' Forgeurs de motz noueaulx ' (as ' encornimatibulé and ' emburelicoque ') and the ' Jargonneurs.' He breaks out impatiently, ' Pleust à Dieu que quelque noble cueur s'employast à mettre et ordonner par regle nostre langage François ' ! This pious wish was to be carried out with exemplary thoroughness before very long. He concludes with a call to arms : ' Donnons tous courage les uns aux autres et nous esveillons à la purifier.'

Etienne Dolet in 1545 expressed succinctly the feeling of Frenchmen at this time about their language and literature—a feeling composed almost equally of conviction of sin and longing for regeneration. His book is called *La Maniére de bien traduire d'une langue en oultre*, and in the prefatory letter to ' Monseigneur de Langei ' he defends himself for his employment of the vernacular. He wants, he says, to honour his country and to ' illustrate ' it, and how can he do this better than by ' celebrer sa langue ? ' The Greeks and the Romans each wrote in their mother-tongue ; and of the moderns, the Italians ' Leonard, Aretin, Sannazare, Petrarcque and Bembe,' and the Frenchmen Budée, Fabri and Bouille have set us an example. There is no reason why ' gradually ' (we moderns are still *in statu pupillari*) our language may not become the equal of the classic tongues. In the essay itself he is

(1) Messire Claude de Seyssel, Evesque de Marseille, etc. *Les Histoires Universelles.*

haunted by the sense of the disorderly condition of the modern languages : he talks of ' langues non reduictes encores en art certain et receu : comme est la Françoyse, l'Italienne, l'Hespaignole, celle d'Allemaigne, d'Angleterre et aultres vulgaires.' And indeed, when we consider the fantastic vagaries of construction and orthography indulged in by some of the vernacular writers of the time, we are bound to admit that these educated men of the Renaissance, who had the Latin model always in mind, were doing something rather less obvious and inevitable than at first sight appears, when they espoused the cause of the vernaculars. Moreover, we can sympathise with the efforts of such men as Louis Meigret (*Traité touchant le commun usage de l'Escriture Françoise*, 1545) and Jean Antoine de Baïf to work out a system of reformed spelling. The same question had interested Trissino and Tolomei in Italy. Another work which is characteristic of the times is Meigret's *La Tretté de la Grammere Francoeze* [1550], written throughout in a fantastic orthography of his own—intended to be phonetic—but revealing at every point a profound interest in the dignity and autonomy of the French language. The most famous of the patriotic manifestoes is Du Bellay's *La Deffense et Illustration de la langue Francoyse* [1549] which, even though it be with arguments borrowed from Speroni, lays down triumphantly the programme of the Pléiade. He begins by affirming the ' equipollence ' of all languages, as independent products of Nature [Ch. I.]. It is unjust, in view of our high degree of civilisation, to call us barbarians [II.]. Even the Latin tongue had to go through a period of apprenticeship before attaining perfection, similarly then the French tongue may hope to attain perfection in time [III.]. Indeed the French language has more possibilities than the pedants suppose : and here Du Bellay turns aside to eulogise ' nostre feu bon roy et pere Françoys ' as restorer of the arts and sciences, and promoter of translations of all kinds into French [IV.]. But translations, though valuable, are not sufficient in themselves to give perfection to the language. Poetry is essentially untranslatable [VI.] ; since each language has a ' je ne scay quoy propre seulement à elle ' which cannot be transmitted by the translator.[1] Even Virgil could not have translated Petrarch [V.]. This theory of the untranslatableness of poetry—derived from Speroni—puts Du Bellay for once in agreement with Croce. Next, Du Bellay explains how we are to enrich our language ; it is by the famous process of ' innutrition ' from the Classics. The Romans imitated the Greeks, ' les devorant, et, apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang et nourriture.'[2] and even so must we do with the Greeks and Latins [VII.]. ' Ce n'est point chose vicieuse, mais grandement louable, emprunter d'une langue etrangere les sentences et les motz, et les approprier à la sienne ', but let us beware of imitating our own older poets, such as Heroet and Marot ! [VIII.]. The Pléiade had as much disdain for its immediate predecessors as Malherbe and Chapelain

(1) *Deffense*, p. 88 (ed. Chamard).
(2) *Ibid.* p. 99.

at the beginning of the next century had for the Pléiade. Du Bellay goes on to say how much better it would be if there were only one language common to all the world (an early plea for esperanto), for as it is, wisdom is locked up in the old tongues, and we have to waste all our best years, like children, in 'learning to speak' instead of in studying philosophy. But the time will come (may it be soon) when, in spite of 'ces venerables Druydes, qui . . . ne craignent rien tant que le secret de leurs mysteres . . . soit decouvert au vulgaire,' all nations will be able to treat of 'hautes matieres' in their own tongues [X.]. Finally, let us remember that it is hopeless to try and equal the ancients in their own languages 'qu'ils avoient succees avecques le laict de la nourrice' [XI.].

In Book II. we have Du Bellay's 'Poetic.' First he gives an estimate of the old French poets, which amounts to little more than that, though Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lauris have merit as 'premiere imaige de la langue francoyse,' and Jan le Maire de Belges for adding new words and poetic expressions to the language, yet, 'on pouroit trouver en notre langue (si quelque scavant homme y vouloit mettre la main) une forme de poesie beaucoup plus exquise, la quele il faudroit chercher en ces vieuz Grecz et Latins, non point és aucteurs francoys.' Yet (as Lorenzo de'Medici had said before) there is nothing wrong with the language, all we want is good writers [II.]. Let no man suppose that by 'naturel' alone he can attain to immortality; there must be 'faim, soif, et longues vigiles' [III.]. The 'Poete futur' must imitate the classic genres, leaving 'aux Jeuz Floreaux de Thoulouze' all the old 'rondeaux, ballades, vyrelaiz, chantz royaulx, chansons, et autres telles épisseries.'[1] Cultivate epigram after the style of Martial, elegy after Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius; 'Chante moy ces odes, incognues encor de la Muse francoyse, d'un luc bien accordé au son de la lyre greque et romaine.' Revive the classic dignity of tragedy and comedy [IV.]. Attempt a French epic, say on Lancelot or Tristan, as Ariosto has done in Italian on Orlando; be not discouraged by the vast labour, for immortality is the reward [V.]. You may invent new words with discretion, and the occasional employment of archaic words will add grandeur to your style [VI.] Rhyme must be used, as it is all we have to make up for the lack of 'quantity,' or if we write 'des vers sans rhythme' (this is all Du Bellay ventures to say on this vexed question) they must be 'bien charnuz et nerveuz, afin de compenser . . . le default de la rythme' [VII.]. Du Bellay declines to enter upon a full-dress 'Ars Poetica' since this has already been done by Aristotle, Horace, and Vida.[2] But he naïvely counsels the use of 'antonomasia,' saying 'Dieu deuz fois né' for 'Bacchus,' 'Vierge chasseresse' for 'Diana,' and so forth. The alternation of masculine and feminine couplets is a good principle, if not superstitiously followed, 'afin que plus facilement on les peust chanter sans varier la musique'

(1) *Ibid.* p. 202.
(2) *Ibid.* p. 282.

[IX.]. This notion of the close connection between verse and music is markedly characteristic of the Pléiade. Towards the close of the book Du Bellay grows more and more rhapsodic about the 'future poet,' and more and more indignant with the rabble of rhymers and 'ce peuple ignorant,[1] peuple ennemy de tout rare et antique scavoir.' The great poet must be content with few readers. He concludes with a lofty panegyric of French civilisation, 'pourquoy donques sommes nous si grands admirateurs d'autruy ?'

The *Art Poetique* of Le Peletier [1555] covers a wider field of poetic theory than the *Deffense*, but it repeats all that Du Bellay had urged in favour of the vernacular. As to imitation, the poet must have Homer and Vergil before his mind as a permanent standard, nevertheless 'par seule imitation rien ne se fet grand.'[2] The classic ideal is clearly expressed when he says 'la premiere et plus dine Vertu du poème et [est] la clerte.'[3] How long, he exclaims, has not our speech been languishing in barbarism (his orthography is too barbarous to reproduce), until these times, when it has at last begun to bestir itself ?[4] The old 'Farces' must become Comedies, 'the Jeus des Martires,' Tragedies, the 'Rommans,' heroic works. The French have no true drama ; only 'Moralitez, e teles sortes de jeuz.' Of all *genres* the Heroic takes the precedence ; no tongue can attain celebrity without it. His final injunction comes refreshingly after all this—'contempler les vives images des choses de la Nature.'[5]

Ronsard, along with much that is common to all the Pléiade, stresses a few other characteristic ideas. In his customary hyperbolical manner, he almost worships those moderns who, during the last fifteen years, have been working for our language : 'Heureux et presque Dieux, ceux qui cultivent leur propre terre.'[6] We should use a rich variety of technical terms culled from 'Marine, Vennerie, Fauconnerie' ; words used by 'Orfevres, Fondeurs, Mareschaux, Minerailliers' ; also provincial expressions used by 'Poitevins, Normans, Manceaux, Lionnois.' Let us not affect court lingo too much ; this is often the jargon of girls, and of gallants more apt to fight well than to speak well. Above all, let there be a poetic diction distinct from prose—Ronsard as nearly as possible reverses the Wordsworthian programme.[7] Poetry must be full of colour and high-sounding phrases, though not turgid. Alexandrines are rejected in the *Franciade* because they tend to prosiness.

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(1) Brunetière, *L'Evolution des Genres*, I., p. 42, notes this separation from the people as a fault in French classicism.
(2) *Art Poetique*, 1555, p. 24.
(3) *Ibid.* p. 41.
(4) *Ibid.* p. 64.
(5) *Ibid.* p. 92.
(6) Ronsard, *Abrégé*, p. 51.
(7) Preface to *Franciade*, 1572.

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(iii). England.

The men of the early Renaissance in England—Elyot, Cheke, Ascham, Wilson, Udall, and the rest—were grave livers, interested in education, and zealous champions of the traditions of their country and of its language. All were keen classicists, but no less interested in preserving the purity and 'plainness' of the English language from the contamination of foreign or 'inkhorn' terms. Many of the ideas characteristic of the Pléiade appear also on this side of the Channel. Thus as early as 1535 we find Sir Thomas Elyot (in the 'Proheme' to the *Castel of Helthe*) complaining against the locking up of wisdom in dead languages, just as Du Bellay did in 1549. Paynims and Jews who wrote about 'Physicke' wrote in their mother-tongue, all the more then should we that are Christians make 'so necessary a knowledge as physicke is' accessible to students. With similar motives Wilson published his *Arte of Logike* and *Arte of Rhetorique* in English. Wilson, like Ascham and the others, feared that continental influences might impair the native worth of the English character and the English language. In Book III. of the *Arte of Rhetorique* he has a section on 'Plainnesse.' Above all, he says, 'never affect any strange ynkehorne terms.' He denounces the 'farre-journeyed gentlemen' who, on their return home, 'powder their talke with oversea language.' The fine courtier who 'will talke nothing but Chaucer' also meets with his disapproval. So Sir John Cheke in his letter to Hoby (the translator of Castiglione) writes: 'I am of opinion that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tunges.' One of the liveliest defences of the English language is that of Richard Mulcaster in *The First Part of the Elementarie . . . of the right writing of our English tung* [1582].[1] He is strongly reminiscent of Du Bellay: 'no one tung is more fine than other naturallie'; our language will sustain polishing as well as Latin did. After repeating the argument about wasting our time in learning dead languages he exclaims bravely, 'I love Rome, but London better; I favour Italie, but England more; I honour the Latin, but I worship the English.' Sidney, sadly conscious as he is of the poverty of English literature, and the defects of contemporary 'diction,' is yet perfectly confident in the sufficiency of the language: 'for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind, which is the end of speech, that hath it equally with any other tongue in the world.'[2] Webbe, who has quite as much contempt for the 'pottical writers,' and 'this tynkerly verse which we call ryme,' also believes in the 'meetness of our speech to receive the best form of poetry.'[3] Puttenham argues that there may be an 'Art of English Poetry' as well as of Greek and Latin, 'our language being no less copious

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(1) pp. 253 ff.
(2) *Apologie*, in G. Smith I., p. 204.
(3) *Discourse*, *ibid*, p. 256.

and pithie, and significative than theirs.'[1] He praises 'the new company of courtly makers,' 'who greatly pollished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie.'[2] Richard Carew, following the example (as he says) of Henri Estienne,[3] wrote an essay on *The Excellency of the English Tongue* [? 1595], defending it on every possible ground as the equal or superior of all others. Carew even finds satisfaction in the fact that we have 'Q. more than the Greekes, K. and Y. more than the Latynes'; so it is not surprising to find that he is also perfectly contented with the existing body of English literature.[4]

In France, in spite of the efforts of De Baïf and his 'Academy of Paris' to introduce classical 'measured verse,' the Pléiade had for the most part accepted accent and rhyme as the modern counterpart of quantity; in England, however, the controversy over the two prosodies long continued to preoccupy writers, and was hardly settled theoretically until Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* [1603] (if then), although in practice it had been decided by Spenser. Ascham, for all his enthusiasm for the vernacular, could not see that the natural basis for English prosody was accent and rhyme. Rhyme, he thinks, was introduced by 'Gothes and Hunnes' 'when all good verses and all good learning were destroyed.' But now that we have the true models again before us, 'surelie to follow rather the Gothes in Ryming than the Greekes in trew versifying were even to eate ackornes with swyne, when we may freely eate wheate bread emonges men.' Surrey avoided rhyme in his translation of Virgil, and so far showed good judgment; but he should have gone further and introduced 'trew quantitie.' Francis Meres in 1598 blandly copies these remarks of Ascham's as if they were of canonical authority.[5] Ascham admits that English may not be adapted for hexameters, owing to the scarcity of dactyls and the prevalence of monosyllables, but he is sure 'our English tong will receive *carmen Iambicum* as naturallie as either Greke or Latin.' Moreover, a true attention to quantity would limit the production of poetry to really learned men, and put a stop to the present output of 'lewd and rude rymes.'

Unfortunately for the advocates of measured verse no one could be certain how to determine the quantity of English syllables; for instance, can position make a syllable long where custom would have it short? These and similar questions were discussed continually and answered differently by different writers; all, however were agreed that the primary need was 'a perfect platforme of prosodia'[6]—an authoritative body of prosodic rules by which writers could work.

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(1) *Art of Eng. Poesie*, Ch. II.
(2) *Ibid.* Ch. XXXI.
(3) *Précellence du langage françois*, 1579.
(4) In G. Smith II., pp. 285–294.
(5) *Palladis Tamia* (in Haslewood's Collection).
(6) Webbe's *Discourse*, in G. Smith I., p. 227.

Gascoigne [*Certayne Notes of Instruction*, 1572] is sound on the question of accent; we must not force words out of their common pronunciation. He deplores the exclusive use of the 'iamb,' and with considerable insight points out that Chaucer varies his lines by the principle of syllabic equivalence.[1] Rhyme is admitted, provided it be not without reason. We should aim at 'perspicuity' of style (the classic ideal); and keep the true English order of words. Gascoigne, unlike the Pléiade, is not intolerant of 'Rithme royall,' 'Verlayes' ballades or 'rondlettes,' but treats them as recognised forms.

The headquarters of the movement for reformed versifying was Leicester House, where the famous Areopagus (of which Sidney, Spenser, Dyer and Drant were the chief members) held their meetings. Spenser, writing to Gabriel Harvey in 1579, informs him that the Areopagus has declared a 'generall surceasing' of 'balde Rymers'; and has 'prescribed certain Lawes and rules of Quantitie of English sillables for English Verse' and 'drawen mee to their faction.' He mentions Drant as the author of the code of rules.[2] Spenser was drawn by Harvey's example into attempting English Hexameters. He complains of the inevitable awkward conflicts between accent and verse quantity 'as in Carpenter the middle sillable, being used shorte in speache, when it shall be read long in Verse,' but still he hopes that rough words may be 'subdued with use.' The example of hexameters that he appends gives small hopes in this direction:

'See yee the blindefoulded pretie God, that feathered Archer,' etc.

But there was lack of agreement, as well there might be, even between Spenser and Harvey, on the rules of English quantity. Harvey's reply to this was a long letter containing examples of his hexameters and 'some precepts of our English reformed versifying.' The hexameters are grotesque to a degree; as for example:

> 'What might I call this Tree? A Laurell? O bonny Laurell:
> Needes to thy bowes will I bow this knee, and vayle my bonetto.'

Or,

> 'O that I might! but I may not: woe to my destinie therefore.'

What can we think of the man who, sending verses like these to the author of the *Faerie Queene*, in the same letter mentions the *Faerie Queene* only to 'send hir home . . . neither in better nor worse case than I found hir,' and reprimands its author for letting 'Hobgoblin runne away with the Garland from Apollo,' bidding him farewell till God 'putte you in a better minde?' Nevertheless, Harvey wins back our esteem later on by sensibly insisting that custom alone must determine the quantity of English syllables; position in itself has no authority. But he thinks a prosody might be worked out from observation of actual usages.

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(1) In G. Smith, I., p. 50.
(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 90 and 99.

Sidney takes a tolerant view of the subjects of 'versifying' and rhyme; the ancients observed quantity, the moderns use accent and rhyme. Like Ronsard and De Baïf, Sidney thinks measured verse is the more suitable for setting to music (De Baïf's Academy had been founded with the idea of promoting a closer union between verse and music); but rhyme, too, 'striketh a certaine musick to the eare,' and so, 'though by another way, it obtaines the same purpose.' The English language, according to Sidney, is better adapted for both prosodies than any other modern language. Treating of the general subject of diction, Sidney shows the contempt of the true classicist for contemporary extravagances such as 'farre-fette words,' hunting the letter, Euphuistic similes from the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and over-spicing of all kinds. The Pléiade had advocated the sparing use of archaic words and even provincialisms; and 'E.K.' in introducing Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* counts it a virtue in his author that 'he hath laboured to restore . . . such good and naturall English words as have been long time out of use and almost cleane disherited.' It is far better so to enrich our vocabulary with native words than to do as others do, and make 'our English tongue a gallimaufray or hodgepodge of al other speches.' But Sidney cannot allow 'that same framing of his stile to an old rustick language'; and why? for the all-sufficient reason that neither Theocritus in Greek, nor Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazaro in Italian affected it. Ben Jonson, too, would not have his young author begin with old writers like Gower or Chaucer, and holds that Spenser 'in affecting the ancients writ no language.'[1]

Stanyhurst's translation of Virgil [1582] was perhaps the worst of all the experiments in English hexameters. It drew upon its author the merited scorn of Thomas Nash, who dubs it 'the extremitie of clownerie,'[2] and quotes in derision the two (travestied) lines:

> 'Then did he make heavens vault to rebounde, with rounce robble hobble
> Of ruffe raffe roaring, with thwick thwack thurlery bouncing.'

William Webbe was also affected by the 'hexameter furie,' and believed that if someone would only produce a great work in measured verse we could deduce from it the body of prosodic rules we so much needed.[3] Much as he dislikes rhyme, however, he has the fairness to admit it because it is 'so ingraffed by custome' and because 'our famous writers' (he accounts Spenser the equal of Virgil and Theocritus) have won 'eternall prayse by theyr memorable workes compyled in that verse.' Puttenham is more enlightened; the nature of our language (he says) does not admit of 'feet,' but we have 'twenty other curious points' more than the

(1) *Discoveries*, p. 57.
(2) Preface to *Menaphon*, in G. S., I., p. 315.
(3) *Discourse*, in G. S., I., p. 279.

ancients had, 'by reason of our rime and tunable concords or simphonie, which they never observed.'[1]

The duel between Campion and Daniel may be regarded as the last phase of this controversy as far as distinctively Renaissance times are concerned, though English poets have often since been tempted to experiment in classical verse-forms. Campion[2] attacked rhyme as barbarous in origin, and as affording only the paltry pleasure of a 'childish titillation.' It also acted as a check on the free expression of ideas; the sonnet, for instance, was a 'Procrustes bed' on which a poet's thought must inevitably be either stretched or crushed. What matters most, however, is that Campion was a poet, and undoubtedly demonstrated, particularly in the lyrics 'Rose-cheekt Lawra, come' and 'Just beguiler' that rhymeless English verses on the Horatian model[3] could be beautiful. All Daniel's arguments, though essentially convincing, could not get over that fact. Daniel's main strength lay in his democratic vindication of 'Custome that is before all law, Nature that is above all Arte.' So far from rhyme being easy, it is far more laborious than 'loose measures,' and prevents the 'boundless running on' which, in his view, is the vice of classical poetry. He claims for modern times the right to follow their bent undeterred by classic precedent, since 'we are the children of nature as well as they.' With even greater independence of thought he rebukes the characteristic intellectual arrogance of the Renaissance, which treated the Middle Ages as beneath contempt. The Middle Ages, too, had their poets and learned men, never yet surpassed; and moreover, how can an age which produced the 'wonderfull architecture of this state of England' be accounted barbarous? Campion's examples he holds to be merely our own old measures disguised with 'forraine Titles,' and vitiated by awkwardness of rhythm. Finally, he admits that long successions of couplets may be tedious, and prefers the use of blank verse in Tragedy.[4]

III. THE RULES.

(i). Italy.

Poetry and the modern languages having received their theoretic justification, there remained the great positive undertaking of constructing a code of rules for the guidance of modern writers; and this became more and more the leading motive in literary theory as the Renaissance wore on. The main mass of Renaissance criticism is pedagogic and not interpretative. Dogma was still in the air; and the artistic products of the ancient world were of canonical authority in the field of æsthetics. Aristotle's *Poetics*

(1) *Arte of Eng. Poesie*, in G. S., II., p. 6.
(2) *Observations in the Art of Eng. Poesie* [1602]. In G. S., II., pp. 327 ff.
(3) Quiller-Couch, *Studies in Literature*, pp. 51 ff.
(4) Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* [1603] in G. S., II., pp. 356 ff.

became the Scripture of the neo-classics, and verbal inspiration was ascribed not only to the text but to the authorised versions, and to the erroneous interpretations of the commentators. Italy formulated the rules; England and Spain recognised them, but did not practise them until their period of Renaissance exuberance had subsided; France accepted them, completed their codification, practised them, and finally imposed them upon Europe. This was the age of the great *genres*—epic, tragedy and comedy; and it was mainly with the production of these that the theorists were concerned. The poet might not perhaps be the 'vates' he had claimed to be, but he was still to be a very scholarly and superior person, who must wear his bays with becoming dignity. With one or two significant exceptions, Renaissance theorists were not interested in poetry as the expression of personal intuition. 'Lyrical' poetry, which for Croce and most modern critics is the only poetry proper,[1] was theoretically at a discount. Prose was hardly thought of as an artistic medium at all. Writers were not valued for registering their emotions about life and the universe in appropriate and organic forms, but for achieving formal excellence in the great genres according to precept, for 'illustrating' their native country and (still this idea persisted) for fulfilling worthily the didactic and prophetic functions of poetic tradition.[2] In England and Spain, where the transition from the Middle Ages to the age of neo-classicism was the most gradual, theory and practice diverged widely. One might suppose that in the countries where Shakespeare and Webster, Lope de Vega and Calderon were producing their masterpieces, the main motive of the theorists would have been the enthusiastic vindication of the principles of the 'romantic' drama. But though Spain had its Tirso de Molina, Lope and Cervantes were half-hearted apologists; and English critics pass over the romantic drama in silence or with disapproval, and recommend the reading of Spenser 'for his matter.' France had its rebels, but their voices were drowned in the neo-classic chorus. Thus, though the Renaissance gave the world some of the greatest masterpieces of creative literature, its formulated 'literary principles' contribute little to the progress of true criticism or æsthetic theory, and derive their interest rather from their place in the general history of culture.[3]

'Imitation' is the great slogan of neo-classicism. The word was taken from Plato and Aristotle, but the Renaissance perverted it from its original æsthetic meaning, and in general used it to signify copying the ancients, and even as a justification for what we should call plagiarism. Thus Vida urges his poet to borrow freely from the ancients, but to do it so that no one notices it. If it is the thought that it appropriated, alter the words; if the words themselves, change their order. But, he adds (as a great concession) 'there are some expressions which you need owe to

(1) Croce, *Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille*, p. 354.
(2) See for instance Davenant's Preface to *Gondibert* [1650] p. 41.
(3) Croce, *Æsthetic* (Ainslie), p. 262.

yourself alone.'[1] Scaliger is really elaborating the Aristotelian 'mimesis' when he says that poetry 'fashions images of things which are not, as well as images more beautiful than life of those things which are.'[2] But when he speaks of 'imitation' he evidently means modelling oneself upon the classics, and especially Virgil. He gives examples of descriptions from Virgil 'to serve you as models in imitating the work of that divine author.' And, as we saw, he regarded Virgil as 'Nature methodised,' so that we could not imitate Nature better than by imitating Virgil. This idea of the ancients as being 'Nature' in tabloid form ready for immediate 'innutrition' became very common in the late Renaissance. Castelvetro, on the other hand, understands the meaning of Aristotle's 'imitation,' and with his usual unconventionality attacks the practice of imitating the ancients, though on the somewhat disappointing ground that it deprives us of the glory of 'overcoming difficulties' in our own way.[3] In Du Bellay, as in Ben Johson, 'imitation' means absorption or digestion of the ancients. Ben Jonson, however, as befitted so independent a spirit, liked to regard the ancients as guides, not commanders; 'nothing is more ridiculous than to make an author a dictator, as the schools have done for Aristotle.'[4]

On the whole, however, what was desired was a literary Scripture, and consequently the revival of the *Poetics* was a central event in the development of Renaissance theory. From the *Poetics* the Italian writers of the sixteenth century evolved the famous doctrines of the 'unities' and of 'verisimilitude.' Aristotle had demanded unity or conciseness of action, and had noted that in Greek tragedy the action was generally comprised within 'a single circuit of the sun, or something near that'[5]—whereas in epic the action had no fixed limit of time. The commentators seized upon this generalisation, erected it into a dogma, and with the aid of the doctrine of verisimilitude or 'dramatic illusion' evolved from it the 'unity of place.' In Robortelli [1548] and Segni[6] [1549] we see the unity of time becoming a dramatic dogma. Trissino[7] makes observance or non-observance of the unity of time the supreme distinction between learned and ignorant poets. Maggi[6] [1550] propounded the theory of verisimilitude, which, however, owed its great authority and vogue to the exposition of Scaliger [1561]. 'Verisimilitude' demands that the time represented in dramatic action shall be identical (or nearly so) with the time taken in representing. 'Disregard of truth,' says Scaliger, 'is hateful to almost every man, therefore neither those battles or sieges at Thebes which are fought through in two hours please me,

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(1) Vida's *Art of Poetry*, trans. by Batteux; pp. 165 and 171.
(2) Padelford's translation, p. 8.
(3) Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, p. 178.
(4) *Discoveries*, p. 66.
(5) *Poetics*, ch. 5.
(6) Spingarn, *Lit. Crit. in the Renaissance*, pp. 136 ff.
(7) Breitinger, *Les Unités d' Aristote avant le Cid de Corneille.*

nor do I take it to be the part of a discreet poet to pass from Delphi to Athens, or from Athens to Thebes in a moment of time.' He blames Aeschylus for having Agamemnon killed and buried so suddenly that the actor has scarcely time to breathe. 'As the whole time for stage representation is only six or eight hours, it is not true to life to have a storm arise and the ship founder in a part of the sea from which no land is visible.'[1] It is evident that the unity of place is implied in this theory, though it is not as yet explicitly stated. It was Castelvetro [1570] who first clearly stated the rule of 'una giornata e un luogo.'[2] And for him 'one place' was definitely restricted, not merely 'ad una città o villa o campagna o simile sito,' but to such space as can be visible to the eyes of a spectator.[3] But Castelvetro is refreshingly inductive; he bases his argument on reason and experience rather than on appeal to authority. He argues from stage-conditions, and what he takes to be stage-expediency. The stage is a small space; hence a small space only must be represented by it. The audience is human, and cannot sit watching a performance for more than twelve hours (surely a very liberal estimate); hence the action represented must not demand more than twelve hours for its completion. Castelvetro reverses the order of Aristotle, and argues for the unity of action with the other two unities as data. It is strange that his realistic mind should not have detected the psychological fallacy involved in the theory of dramatic illusion.

(ii). France.

In France the unities were proclaimed (and contested) quite early, though the controversy about the rules lasted until after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Most of the characteristic doctrines appear in Jean de la Taille's Preface to his tragedy of *Saul le Furieux* [1572], 'faicte selon l'art et à la mode des vieux autheurs tragiques.' After conventionally discussing the subject-matter and aim of tragedy and the character of the tragic hero, he comes to the question of the unities. Nothing could be more explicit than his dictum: 'il fault tousjours representer l'histoire ou le jeu en un mesme jour et en un mesme lieu.' Moreover—and this is another important article in the neo-classic creed—no violent action should be represented on the stage; that is to say, we must use messengers to recount to the audience all the more startling events of the plot. Jean de la Taille is a reformer, eager to break with mediæval traditions. He demands good arrangement of material, the exclusion of everything superfluous, and especially of the old allegorical personages representing moral qualities. France has as yet no true tragedy—only 'ameres espiceries.' We must naturalise the veritable tragedy and comedy 'qui auraient aussi bonne grace en nostre

(1) *Poetics*, trans. by Padelford, p. 60.
(2) Spingarn, op. cit., p. 99.
(3) Quoted by Bovet, Introd. to Chapelain's *Adonis*, p. 28.

langue qu'en la Grecque et Latine.' We can easily see the value of the classic example in introducing some sort of order and artistry into the formless mediæval drama, yet how insufficient the passion for imitation could be as a substitute for the genuine creative impulse, is abundantly proved by comparing the frigid 'classical' plays of this period with the great products of the 'romantic' drama, especially in Spain and England. In France the case was rather different; the French temperament is general, and the artistic consciousness of Racine in particular, found the rules congenial, and the creative impulse was able to act to advantage within their limits.

The main movement in French literary theory from the start of the seventeenth century was towards what Brunetière calls 'la nationalisation de la Renaissance'—a process in which Malherbe, Chapelain and Boileau were the chief workers. The Pléiade was forgotten, and 'raison universelle' became the battle-cry. M. Bovet thinks that by 1620 Chapelain was 'parfaitement au courant des trois unités,' and that it was he above all, working in alliance with Richelieu and the Academy, 'who prepared the final triumph of the unities and the advent of the classic system in all its essential features.'[1] Cartesian rationalism was in the air; the artist, according to Chapelain, imitates nature (and the ancients) in so far as nature is 'conformable to reason.' The characteristic neo-classic tendency was to determine everything by a priori pinciples; thus, even the psychology of a theatrical audience was analysed and settled in advance according to the immutable principles of reason, quite irrespective of the truths of actual experience. Jean Mairet [1631][2] rebukes contemporary writers for neglecting the unities, and then asserts authoritatively that 'il est impossible que l'imagination ne se refroidisse, et qu'une si soudaine mutation de scene ne la surprenne, et ne la desgoute extrèmement.'

Yet in spite of this victorious advance of the rules, culminating in Corneille's weary acquiescence and Boileau's triumphant codification, there had all along been dissentient voices, whose arguments when pieced together form a tolerably complete statement of the 'romantic' point of view. As early as 1582 Jean de Beaubreuil, in the preface to his tragedy of *Regulus*, requests the reader, in view of the long intervals of time covered by the story, not to think it strange if 'j'ay voulu que les cinq actes . . . ne fussent estroictement compassés à la forme de quelques tragiques trop superstitieux, qui ont pensé qu'il ne falloit representer en la tragedie aultre chose que ce qui se pouvait faire en un jour.' He adds in self-justification that many learned contemporary writers had used the same licence. In 1598 De Laudun brings forward a five-fold refutation of the unity of time.[3] First, even if the ancients observe it we need not, since we are not

(1) Bovet, op. cit., p. 3.
(2) Preface to *Silvanire*.
(3) *Art Poetique*, quoted by Spingarn, op. cit., p. 209.

bound to follow them in every detail. Next, observance of this law deprives our tragedies of interest, or else forces us in compensation to introduce improbabilities. Thirdly, even the ancients did not observe it—witness the *Troades* of Seneca, and some of the plays of Euripides and Sophocles. Fourthly, the subjects of tragedy are the lives and fortunes of great men, which cannot be comprised in a single day. Lastly, the tragedies in which this rule is observed are no better than those in which it is not.

It is noticeable that those who attack the rules are generally playwrights writing to earn their living by pleasing the general public; and theorists who believe that popular appeal is of more value than scholarly technique. The controversy is no longer between poetry and asceticism, but between pleasure and the rules; between the democratic and the aristocratic ideals of literature. Shakespeare, who wrote for the widest commonalty, does not attack the rules; but he ignores them, and seems to have cared nothing even about the printing of his plays. Ben Jonson, on the other hand, has a body of theoretic doctrine, and is aristocratic to a degree. 'Art hath an enemy called ignorance.' He closes *Cynthia's Revels* with 'By ——, 'tis good, and if you like't you may.' He thought Shakespeare 'wanted art': 'sufflaminandus erat.' To the players who honoured Shakespeare for his divine facility, and boasted that he never blotted a line, Jonson replies, 'would he had blotted a thousand.'[1]

The anti-classicist predecessors of Corneille in France were more explicit about their principles than the English romantics. Pierre de Larivey, for instance, claimed to be the introducer of prose comedy into France, and cites the authority of Italians such as Lorenzo de Medici, Razzi, Dolce, Aretino and others. Prose, he says, comes more naturally than verse from the lips of the common people with whom comedy is concerned.[2] In the Prologue to *La Constance* (both play and prologue are translated almost literally from Razzi) there is a discussion of the views of the classicist, to which is added the following reply, presumably expressive of Larivey's own opinion:

'Others hold that since the ages differ one from another, and since the usages of to-day vary even from those of twenty years past, modern comedies need not resemble those which were written sixteen hundred years ago and upwards, our manner of life not resembling that of the ancients.'[3]

Alexandre Hardy put into words the 'literary principles' which Shakespeare practised but never formulated. 'Whatever is sanctioned by usage, and satisfies the taste of the public, I consider to be legitimate.'[4] 'I approve greatly,' he says again, 'smoothness of verse, uninterrupted flow, a choice of rare conceits couched in

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(1) *Discoveries*, p. 23. [vol. VI.
(2) *Epître* to vol. of 6 plays [1579]: in *Ancien Théâtre Francais*,
(3) *Ibid.*, vol. VI.
(4) Quoted by Ottô; introd. to Mairet's *Silvanire;* p. xlii. [Bamberg, 1890].

well-chosen terms, and without bombast, such as we admire in the masterpieces of Malherbe ; but as for trying to restrict a Tragedy within the limits of an Ode or an Elegy, that is neither possible nor desirable.'[1]

In 1628, that is to say, shortly before the triumph of the rules in France, appeared *Tyr et Sidon*, a 'Tragicomédie divisée en deux journées,' by Schelandre ; a work which, as its title shows, not only violated the unity of time, but by mingling tragedy and comedy ignored the rigid separation of the genres which was demanded by neo-classic decorum and neo-classic psychology. To this was prefixed a Preface by 'F. O. P.' (attributed to François Ogier, Parisien) which defends the 'romantic' point of view in considerable detail and with much vivacity. In reply to the doctrine of verisimilitude, Ogier points out that verisimilitude is really far more seriously sacrificed by crowding too many events into one day, involving as this does the continual use of messengers, and improbable appearances of shepherds, nurses, and other *ad hoc* personages for purposes of identification (he cites *Oedipus* as a case in point). 'Il est plus commode à une bonne hostellerie qu'il n'est convenable à une excellente tragedie d'y voir arriver incessament des Messagers.' To avoid their dull recitals the actions themselves should be shown on the stage (the romantics of 1830 could have said no more). The *Persae* of Aeschylus is 'plat' and 'maigre' through dearth of action. Moreover, as to the unity of time, do not the actions of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, and the *Heautontimoroumenos* of Terence cover two days ? Next Ogier states the democratic pleasure-doctrine : 'La poësie, et particulierement celle qui est composée pour le théâtre, n'est faite que pour le plaisir et le divertissement, et ce plaisir ne peut proceder que de la varieté des évenemens qui s'y representent.' He shows a historical sense in advance of his time when he argues that the peculiar character of Greek tragedy, and especially its conservatism, was due to its connection with ritual, to the system of prizes and to the prescription of subjects—that is, to a set of conditions which are no longer operative. The Latins, he continues, simply followed the Greeks ; and the Renaissance slavishly copied both ; would that 'François Bacon, le Censeur public des deffauts de la science humaine' had directed his attention to this point ! Too much ardour of imitation prevents our poets from attaining the excellence and the glory of the ancients. Ogier then takes the highest line of all, and asserts the equivalent value of the respective intuitions of all ages and nations—a proposition which, if it had been accepted there and then, would have accelerated the fall of the neo-classic structure by nearly two centuries. Different peoples have different ideals of beauty, and the ancients are not perfect models from which we must not depart one jot. 'Nous les imiterons bien mieux si nous donnons quelque chose au genie de nostre païs et au goust de nostre langue.' As to the legitimacy of tragi-comedy, is not life made up of laughter and tears so commingled ?

(1) Hardy, *Pref.* to vol. III. of works [1626.]

(iii). England.

In England such criticism as there was about the rules was almost all of a classicist cast. Ascham mentions that of the modern tragedies he has seen the only two that are 'able to abyde the trew touch of Aristotle's preceptes and Euripides' examples' are 'M. Watson's *Absalon* and Georgius Buckananus *Jephthe*.'[1] George Whetstone [Dedication to *Promos and Cassandra*, 1578][2] complains against the want of order in English comedy: the English comedy-writer 'fyrst groundes his work on impossibilities; then in three howers ronnes he throwe the worlde, maryes, gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder Monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heaven, and fetcheth Divels from Hel.' Moreover, these writers 'use one order of speach for all persons; a grose Indecorum.' Sidney states the doctrine of the unities in the most uncompromising manner,[3] and finds that none of our Tragedies and Comedies observes the rules. Even *Gorboduc*, which he values for its 'stately speeches and well-sounding Phrases, clyming to the height of Seneca his stile,' disappoints him by being 'very defectious in the circumstances.' He makes the violation of the unities the subject of much banter on the lines of Whetstone's remarks quoted above. Our writers begin their action *ab ovo*, whereas they should take it at the crisis. Sidney believes in the separation of the genres, and cannot abide our 'mungrell Tragy-comedie.' The 'Comedians' are censured for aiming solely at raising base laughter, whereas they should aim at 'delight' and 'mixt with it, that delightful teaching which is the end of Poesie.'

Ben Jonson was nothing if not independent of spirit, and as we have seen, he regarded the ancients as guides, not commanders. Nevertheless he was definitely a classicist. On the general question of style he is for a 'laboured and accurate,' a 'strict and succinct' manner of writing.[4] He treats of the 'parts' of Comedy and Tragedy in the right Aristotelian fashion, laying down that the fable shall be 'one and entire,' having 'beginning, midst and end,' 'neither too vast nor too little,' and not exceeding the compass of a day.[5] In the Prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* [1601] he announces that he

> '. . . hath not so loved the stage
> As he dare serve the ill customs of the age'

and by 'ill customs' he means disregard of the unities—

> 'To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard, and weed
> Past three-score years: . . .
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars.'

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(1) *Scholemaster;* in G. S., I., p. 24.
(2) In G. S., I., pp. 58–60.
(3) *Apology;* in G. S., I., pp. 197 ff.
(4) *Discoveries*, pp. 54 and 61.
(5) *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Instead, he proposes to portray

> ' . . . deeds, and language, such as men do use :
> And persons, such as comedy would chuse
> When she would show an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes.'

In the Preface of *Sejanus* [1605] he admits that he has not kept the unity of time or introduced a chorus ; and here, where it suits him, he grants that it is not needful, since it is indeed impossible ' to observe the ould state and splendour of Drammatick Poëmes, with preservation of any popular delight.' But he points out that it is not ' for want of a convenient knowledge ' that he has transgressed the ' strict Lawes ' ; and that he has ' discharged the other offices of a Tragick writer ' by means of ' truth of Argument, dignity of Persons, gravity and height of Elocution, fulnesse and frequencie of Sentence.' In the dedicatory epistle of *Volpone* [1607] he lashes the scurrilous and irregular comedies of the time, and the degradation of the poetic office, and announces that in this play he has laboured ' to reduce, not onely the antient formes, but manners of the Scene, the easinesse, the propriety, the innocence, and last the doctrine, which is the principall end of poesy, to inform men in the best reason of living.' If the learned critic cavil at ' my catastrophe,' let him note ' with what ease I could have varied it nearer his scale ' ; but Jonson prefers to execute poetic justice.

(iv). Spain.

In Spain the romantic drama was perhaps more enthusiastically vindicated than anywhere else ; but yet its chief exponent Lope de Vega, who, unlike Shakespeare, committed himself to a theoretic statement of principle (or want of principle), is a distinctly unsatisfactory advocate ; and Cervantes, who also expresses views on the subject, hardly makes his true position clear. The whole of *Don Quijote* may be regarded as a protest in the name of reason and realism against the fantastic disorder and artificiality of ' romance.' In Book I., ch. XLVII., the ' Canon,' in discussing fiction, expresses a typically classicist ideal when he asserts that intellectual pleasure consists in seeing a presentation of the inherent order of things. ' Fiction is fine in proportion to its semblance to truth.' In the next chapter the drama comes up for discussion. The Canon thinks that in the long run adherence to the ' rules of art ' is a sounder policy than writing down to the groundlings. The priest rejoins by descanting, much in the manner of Sidney, upon the absurdity of representing whole life-histories and widely-separated continents in one play. Foreigners who carefully observe the laws regard us Spaniards as crude and uncultivated. Greater moral and æsthetic pleasure may be derived from a ' good ' play than from a bad one, hence good work better serves the main purpose of plays, which is to keep the people out of mischief. Unfortunately, poets as a rule spoil their style by catering slavishly for the demands of actors and audiences. There should be a strict censorship at court, both for plays and for fiction, to ensure the dissemination of the best work only.

Whether all this represents the real view of Cervantes is questionable; one critic[1] at least sees in it a definitely ironic purpose. And certainly this view is borne out by a passage in Act II. of the *Blessed Vagabond*, where 'Comedy' in person gives a spirited defence of the national drama: 'the times change all things and perfect the arts, and to improve what has been imagined is no difficult task. I was fair in times gone by, and to-day, if you will look well, I am not bad, even if I do not comply with the grave precepts of the ancients. Present usage is not subject to art. . . . Now the drama is a map upon which you may see London and Rome not even a finger's length apart. It matters nothing to the listener that I pass in a moment from Germany to Guinea without leaving the stage; for thought is winged, and by it you can accompany me wherever I go.'[2] This is a frank recognition of a psychological fact to which the exponents of the rules were blinded by their own a priori principles.

Lope de Vega's *Arte Nueva de hazer comedias en este tiempo* [1609] is one of the strangest critical documents of the Renaissance. Written in a nonchalant and desultory vein, its content amounts to little more than 'video meliora proboque; deteriora sequor.' It is thus admirably summarised by Breitinger: 'Aristote a mille fois raison. Nous autres poètes romantiques, nous avons tous les torts. Mais que voulez-vous? C'est plus fort que nous. Et le peuple, la nation, ne demande que cela.'[3] He has written, he says, four hundred and eighty-three comedies, and 'all of these, except six, gravely sin against art.[4] Yet, in fine, I defend what I have written, and I know that, though they might have been better in another manner, they would not have had the vogue they have had.' It was not from ignorance that he had ignored the precepts, but because, 'I found that comedies were not at that time, in Spain, as their first devisers thought they should be written.' Hence 'when I have to write a comedy I lock in the precepts with six keys, I banish Terence and Plautus from my study that they may not cry out at me: . . . and I write in accordance with that art which they devised who aspired to the applause of the crowd; for, since the crowd pays for comedies, it is fitting to talk foolishly to it to satisfy its taste.'[5]

Lope, the great and popular national dramatist of Spain, was in a strong enough position to treat the matter thus whimsically; as it were to dodge the issue with a grimace. It was left to others to attempt the serious defence of his art. One of the most noteworthy of these attempts is contained in the *Cigarrales de Toledo* of Tirso de Molina [1624]. Tirso's defence is in the form of a

(1) Brander Matthews, Introd. to Lope's *Arte Nueva*, p. 16.
(2) Quoted by Schevill, *Cervantes*, p. 351.
(3) In *Les Unités d' Aristote avant le Cid de Corneille.*
(4) Trans. by W. T. Brewster, p. 37.
(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

conversation supposed to ensue upon a performance of his play *El Vergonzoso en Palacio.* One of the spectators condemns the play in the name of the rules. 'Don Alexo' then replies in its defence. Spanish plays can boast certain advantages over those of the ancients, even though they are contrary to the principles of their first devisers. The ancients laid down that the action of a comedy must take place in twenty-four hours ; but then how can we suppose a respectable lover to woo a serious-minded dame, win her and marry her in one day ? What place is left for all the story of jealousies, hopes and longings—for all the trappings without which no love-story is of any interest ? These considerations are of far more weight than the counter-considerations of the classicists as to the inexpediency of an audience, sitting in one place, being compelled to witness events which are supposed to occupy many days. 'Just as one who reads a story in a few pages and in a few hours, can become acquainted with events, befalling at long intervals of time and in different places,' so the spectator of comedy should be able to follow similar events portrayed to the life ; and if the action cannot with verisimilitude take place in one day, he must simply imagine that the necessary time has elapsed. The painter is able, 'in the small space of an ell-and-a-half of canvas' to represent aerial perspective, and 'it is not just that the licence which is conceded to the brush should be denied to the pen,' which is the nobler instrument of expression. The argument from antiquity is nothing : we must add new perfections. It would be a fine thing if, because the first musical composer derived his ideas from the sounds of a hammer upon an anvil, those who now profess the art were 'to go about laden with the instruments of Vulcan.' Comedy may rightly vary the principles of the ancients by 'grafting' the tragic upon the comic. Lope de Vega's practice should have as much authority for us as that of Aeschylus and Euripedes had for the Greeks. 'He, who has raised comedy to its present state of perfection and refinement, is worthy to form a school of his own ; and we who boast of being his disciples may esteem ourselves lucky in having such a master, and should constantly defend his doctrines against detraction.[1]

Shakespeare had no follower to say as much for him. Webster, indeed, in the Preface to the *White Divel* [1613] refers to the merits of his predecessors, and speaks of the 'right happy and copious industry of M. Shakespeare' ; but for the rest he treats the subject of the rules in the manner of Lope de Vega. 'If it be objected that this is no true Drammaticke Poem, I shall easily confesse it . . . willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind have I faulted ; for should a man present to such an Auditory the most sententious tragedy that ever was written, observing all the critical laws . . . yet . . . the breath that comes from the uncapable multitude is able to poison it.'

(1) Tirso de Molina, *Cigarrales de Toledo ;* pp. 124 ff., in *Biblioteca Renacimiento* edn.

(v). Three Sixteenth Century Heretics.

When certain opinions and dogmas become universally accepted the heretics become interesting. In the sixteenth century a few such rebels registered a refreshing protest against the prevailing trend of learned doctrine—the chief amongst them being Aretino, Giordano Bruno, and Montaigne.

Aretino[1] was a sixteenth century forerunner of the school of 'Sturm und Drang.' He attacked Renaissance 'Poetic' both from the standpoint of romanticism and from that of realism. At the time when respect for erudition was at its height, he came forward, a 'parvenu,' to assert the power of individual, untutored genius, and to proclaim the revolutionary truth that 'without education, without the ancients, a man could be a great artist.'[2] 'O wandering sheep!' he exclaims in a letter to Dolce, 'how often must I repeat to you that Poetry is a caprice of Nature in her exultation, that it rests upon individual inspiration, and that lacking this, a poetic work is a Tambourine without bells and a belfry without chimes.'[3] 'I am amused at the pedants who persuade themselves that the whole of education consists in the Greek and Latin tongues, and lay it down that those who do not understand these languages have no right to speak.' 'A long life and a long experience teach more than all tutors and all books.[4] We have seen how Aretino opposed the adoption of fourteenth century Tuscan advocated by Bembo and his school. He was a great appreciator of painting, an art which was far less encumbered with theoretic obstacles than that of literature. What he missed in the poets and men of letters he found in the painters—'the unprejudiced and direct expression and representation of nature.'[5] He desired to carry into the realm of literature the vivacity and spontaneity of painting: 'I make it my business,' he says, 'to draw characters with the same vividness with which the amazing Titian executes his portraits: and just as the best painters attach most value to a good composition of sketched figures, so I print my writings as they are, and do not trouble myself about decking my words in colours, since the difficulty lies in the drawing . . . and everything but spontaneous originality is rubbish.'[6]

It is no wonder that Croce salutes this heresiarch across the centuries as a fellow-spirit. Giordano Bruno also earns the praise of the modern æsthetician for his attack on the rigid separation of the genres, contained in the first dialogue of the *Eroici Furori* [1585]. Tansillo (one of the speakers in the dialogue) says that poetry is not born of the rules, but the rules are derived from poetry. The rules are only useful to him who could not sing

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(1) Karl Vossler, *P. Aretino's Künstlerisches Bekenntnis* [Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher, 1900.]
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 47.
(3) Quoted by Vossler, op. cit., p. 54.
(4) *Ibid.*, p. 57.
(5) *Ibid.*, p. 49.
(6) *Ibid.*, p. 61.

without them. 'There are as many sorts of poets as there are human sentiments and ideas.'[1] In other words, the genres and the rhetorical 'classes' are of little interest, and each poem, being the expression of an intuition, is an autonomous product of the æsthetic activity.

The egocentric spirit of Montaigne also revolted against the yoke of authority and pedantry. Truth and reason are the touchstones to which everything must be brought. 'We can say, Cicero says thus: these were the manners of Plato: these are the very words of Aristotle: but what do we say ourselves? What do we judge? A parrot would say as much as that.'[2] 'We buy our Greek and Latin too dear'; we should cultivate the language spoken in the market place of Paris.[3] Montaigne even anticipates Croce's views about 'unexpressed intuitions'; 'some make excuses that they cannot express themselves'—but Montaigne thinks that in that case there is generally nothing to express.

(vi). Conclusion.

In the seventeenth century the rules received philosophic sanction from the prevalent Cartesian[4] conception of a mechanical universe based on order and classification. The rules reduced nature to method, but then nature itself was methodical, so that to follow the rules was really the most effectual way of following nature. As the century wore on 'reason' and 'good sense' began to replace the authority of the ancients as the basis of neo-classicism. So we find Rapin in 1674 writing: ''tis by these Rules that all becomes just, proportionate and *natural;* for they are founded upon good Sense and sound reason rather than on Authority and Example.'[5] And Rymer, in the Preface to his translation of Rapin's *Reflexions* says 'nor would the modern poets blindly resign to this practice of the ancients were not the reasons convincing and clear as any demonstration in Mathematicks.'[6] As late as 1771 Batteux echoes this view: 'la marche des Poètes est reglée par des principes invariables. Comment ne le seroit-elle pas? Puisque celle de la nature l'est, et que la poesie n'est et ne peut être que l'imitation de la nature.'[7]

But the interest taken by the seventeenth century in the psychology of genius, in the distinctions between the faculties of 'wit,' 'fancy,' 'judgment,' and in questions of 'taste,' indicates the beginning of the independent study of æsthetic problems for their own sake. Moreover, rationalism is a dangerous solvent; and 'good sense' could as well be used to undermine the rules

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(1) Trans. by L. Williams, p. 40.
(2) Essay *Of Pedantry* (Cotton's trans.).
(3) *Of Education of Children.*
(4) Emile Krantz, *Essai sur l'esthétique de Descartes* [1882].
(5) Trans. by Kennet [1716].
(6) In Spingarn's *Crit. Ess. of 17th cent.*, II., p. 165.
(7) Batteux, *Avant-propos* to *Les Quatre Poètiques*, p. 12.

as to justify them. We may conclude by citing two French authors of the classic period in whom this spirit of emancipatory rationalism is exemplified.

The Chevalier de Méré[1] writes thus, between 1645–1675: 'Believe me, we should follow wherever genius leads, without any other divisions or distinctions than those of 'good sense.' 'We should follow neither rules nor methods except in so far as good taste approves them. We should prefer our taste to the accepted rules, provided that we are sure our taste is good.' 'My idea is to follow one's bent and one's taste rather than to imitate anyone, and to see what excellence we can discover in man and in nature. This is the way to acquire an idea of perfection in each matter.' The Chevalier even gives us a foretaste of the gospel of Rousseau: 'Ce qui tient du champêtre, et même du sauvage, ne laisse pas souvent d'être noble—quoique fort différent de la "noblesse" des Cours. C'est qu'on y voit alors je ne sais quoi de digne et de grand, mais tout simple et comme sans art.'

And Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Sieur de Saint-Evrémond, Anglophile and man of the world, thus dismisses the noble army of neo-classicists in 1677: "Vous avez raison, Messieurs, de vous moquer des songes d'Aristote et de Horace, des rêveries de Heinsius et de Grotius, des caprices de Corneille et de Ben-Johnson, des fantaisies de Rapin et de Boileau. La seule règle des honnêtes gens, c'est la mode. Que sert une raison qui n'est point reçue, et qui peut trouver à redire à une extravagance qui plait?"[2] St. Evrémond praises the English comedy, and says that no other approaches more nearly to that of the ancients in the essential points of truth and characterisation. 'Il faut aimer la règle, pour éviter la confusion, il faut aimer le bon sens qui modère l'ardeur d'une imagination allumée, mais il faut ôter à la règle toute contrainte qui gêne, et bannir une raison scrupuleuse, qui par un trop grand attachement à sa justesse, ne laisse rien de libre et de naturel.'[3]

The poet's 'bays' have long since withered; and he no longer preaches or prophesies. The critic no longer dogmatises or defends, but is content to try and indicate the psychological mainspring of each work he considers. Yet there are signs that the Crocean criticism, which merely registers the intuitions of others without estimating their relative value, has had its day. We may yet learn from the Renaissance that 'the true critic must have a humanistic philosophy . . . an ideal of the good life,'[4] whereby to distinguish which intuition-expressions are valuable and which are without significance.

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(1) From Chamaillard's selection of Méré's sayings.
(2) *Oeuvres Mêlées* (ed. Giraud), II., p. 414.
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 387.
(4) Middleton Murry, *The Function of Criticism* (in *Aspects of Lit.*).

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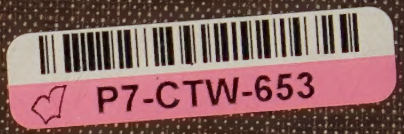
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